

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01588241 8

JOHN BRIGHT
AND THE
PEACE PARTY.

ALLAN,
BOOKSELLER, STATIONER,
MUSIC SELLER,
Tyne and ~~South~~ *Coast*.
NORTH ~~BRITAIN~~ *CO.*



JOHN BRIGHT AND THE PARTY OF
PEACE, RETRENCHMENT, AND REFORM.

EDINBURGH	.	.	J. MENZIES & CO.
GLASGOW	.	.	PORTEOUS BROTHERS.
LONDON	.	.	14 IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.
MELBOURNE	.	.	GEORGE ROBERTSON.
TORONTO	.	.	JAMES CAMPBELL & SON.

MEMORABLE MEN OF THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY.

V.

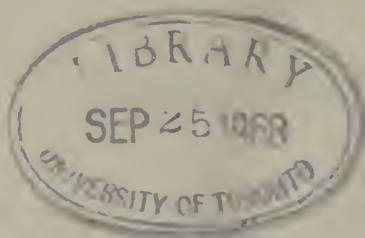
JOHN BRIGHT

AND THE PARTY OF
PEACE, RETRENCHMENT, AND REFORM.

BY
LEWIS APJOHN.

LONDON:
THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
14 IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

DA
565
B8A7





Preface.

THIS Volume is not, in the ordinary sense of the term, a biography. Mr. Bright's life has been comparatively uneventful, so far as the general public is concerned in knowing or inquiring into it; and the reasons which in any case impose silence or reserve upon one who traces the career of an eminent man during his lifetime apply with special force in this instance.

In the House of Commons and on the platform Mr. Bright has freely lifted the veil from his thoughts, his motives of action, his political and even his religious belief, so that as a statesman and orator we seem to know him better than any other man of the century. But beyond these limits he is less known; and it is his privilege to be so. He has been characteristically a man of the people—loving, as he said at the moment when he was invited to enter Mr. Gladstone's first Cabinet, to remain among his own people. He has not had, or sought to have, many connections with the upper ranks of society, or with the circles which would have drawn him more prominently before the

eyes of his fellowmen. He has never put himself forward ; he has not been a man of compliments in the social world and of compromise in the political world ; and thus there have been fewer occasions in either on which he has been the chief actor in such scenes and incidents as the biographer may legitimately take for his theme. Failing these, the only alternative is to regard John Bright as the centre of a political and social movement whereof he has been the main source and spring and guide ; and in dealing with this movement we may find ample opportunity of following the career of the statesman, as well as abundant interest in the development of his policy.

The narrative of Mr. Bright's public life is necessarily in some sense an account of the Radical movements of the Nineteenth Century, and is therefore complementary to the accounts of the public life and action of Mr. Gladstone, Lord Beaconsfield, and Mr. Cobden—which occupied the first three volumes in the present Series. It may be hoped that any one who reads the four volumes in succession will find that the last one simply completes, as was intended, the political record of the other three.

Particular attention has been paid in the following pages to the public speeches of Mr. Bright, and to his position as an orator who exercised vast influence on the thousands who constantly heard and read them. Many extracts from these speeches have been added, the text quoted being that of Mr. Thorold Rogers's edition of Mr. Bright's *Speeches on Questions of Public Policy*.

L. A.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Introductory—John Bright the Type of a Class—Peace, Retrenchment and Reform—Moderate Liberals and Advanced Liberals	13

CHAPTER II.

A Long Revolution; 1790–1832—The Power of making War—Democracy and Peace—The Economists—Growth of the National Debt—Hume and Bright—Parliamentary Reform	21
--	----

CHAPTER III.

The Demand for Reform—Excluded Classes—Scandals of the Representative System—The Money Value of Votes and Seats—The Government of England in the Hands of a Coterie—John Bright's Introduction to Politics	30
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
The First Reform Act—William the Fourth—Lord Grey's Coalition Cabinet—Lord Brougham's Bill—The Government Bill—The Election of 1831—Political Education of the Masses—Mr. Bright's Idea of the Conservative Party .	41

CHAPTER V.

The English Quakers—Early Persecutions—William Penn—Their Tenets and Habits of Thought—Emancipation—The First Quakers in Parliament	50
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

The New Arena ; 1832-42—Disappointment of the Reformers—The Irish Catholics—The King and his Ministry—Lord Melbourne—The Duke of Wellington's Failure as a Minister—The Melbourne Administration—Timidity of the Whigs—The House and the Country—Chartists and Radicals .	58
---	----

CHAPTER VII.

The Anti-Corn Law Movement—Cobden and Bright—The League in London—Mr. Bright and his Fellow-Townsmen—Condemnation of Violence—Speeches on Free Trade .	66
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Bright in Parliament—Quaker Friends—The Two Elections for Durham—First Speech in the House of Commons—Outspoken Judgments—Speeches Outside the House—Working-men and the Wealthy Classes—Triumph of the Free Trade Agitation	81
--	----

CHAPTER IX.

	PAGE
The Game Laws—Character of these Laws—Carlyle's Opinion— Mr. Bright's Committee—Its Report—Mr. Bright's Address to the Tenant Farmers—Failure of the Agitation	93

CHAPTER X.

Retrenchment—The Free-Traders and Financial Reform—Diver- gence on this Point of Bright and Cobden—Mr. Bright suggests the French Treaty—His Condemnation of the Growing Expenditure	110
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

The Peace Party—The Quarrel with Russia—Mr. Bright and Manchester—Drifting into War—Lord Palmerston's Satire —Mr. Bright's Plain Speaking—His Discrimination—Mr. Kinglake's References to the Peace Party—Speeches in the House—Idle Fear of Russia—The Black Sea—Mr. Bright on Palmerston and Russell—His Letter to Mr. Absalom Watkin	120
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

The "Policy of War"—International Arbitration—International Concert—Decline of the Fashion of War—Disarmament— The Ground of Hope—Rational Foreign Policy—Out-door Relief for the Aristocracy—The Palmerston Policy—Mr. Bright's Notion of the Military System	141
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

The Cost of War—War Expenditure and National Debts of the Great Powers—Cost of Recent Campaigns—Economical Reform—"The Taxes of a whole Village"—Unpopularity of the Peace Party	150
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

	PAGE
International Arbitration—The Intercourse between Nations— The Basis of Peace—The French Treaty a Peacemaker— Mr. Bright on Arbitration—Recent Examples—The Pro- gress of the Movement—The Congress of Paris—The Alabama Claims	164

CHAPTER XV.

India and Ireland—The old and new Government of India—Mr. Bright's Statesmanlike Ideas—The Development of India— The Mutiny—Ireland under Peel—Coercion—Mr. Bright on the Land and the Church—Predictions	178
--	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

Manchester to Birmingham—The General Election of 1857— Lord Palmerston's Address—Mr. Bright's Illness—His Election for Birmingham—His Return to Work—The Renewed Agitation for Parliamentary Reform	193
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

America—English Feeling towards the United States—Mr. Bright's Admiration of the Republic—Comparison with England—The Institution of Slavery—The War of Secession —Sympathy with the South—Mr. Bright's Championship of the North—Mr. Gladstone's Opinion—The Cotton Trade —Indian and American Cotton—Mr. Roebuck's Motion— The Abolition of Slavery	199
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Parliamentary Reform—Lord Derby's Administration—Mr. Disraeli's Fancy Franchises—Mr. Bright's Criticisms—He declares himself a Conservative	215
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

	PAGE
Household Suffrage—A Long Delay—Lord Palmerston's Resistance—His Death—Lord Russell's Administration—Mr. Gladstone's Bill—The Recess of 1866—Mr. Disraeli's Bill—Amended by the Liberals—Bitter Criticism—Mr. Bright's Speeches on Reform	229

CHAPTER XX.

Mr. Bright in the Cabinet—His Claims to Office—His Improved Position in the Country—A Free Breakfast Table—The Shunamite Woman—Political Consistency	242
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

The First Gladstone Administration—Its Popularity—Its Achievements—Irish Reforms—Mr. Bright's Illness and Resignation—The Unpopularity of the Ministry—Mr. Bright's Re-Entrance into the Cabinet—The Dissolution of 1874	250
--	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

The Triumph of Arbitration—The Washington Treaty—The Geneva Award—The Lord Chief Justice's Protest—Mr. Richard on the Settlement	260
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Russian Bugbear—Mr. Bright at Llandudno—"Rhodomontade and Balderdash"—Christianity in Politics—A "Miserable Nightmare"—The Judgment of the Country	269
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

	PAGE
Irish Remedies—Coercion—The Acts of 1880 and 1881—Oaths and Affirmations: Mr. Bradlaugh's Case - - - -	280

CHAPTER XXV.

Summary—Mr. Bright's Consistency of Principle and Opinion— His Statesmanship—Oratory—Success—Conclusion - - -	289
--	-----

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX - - - - -	300
-------------------------------	-----





CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

SO much of the political history of England in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century as is not included in the period of the Napoleonic Wars (1800–1815) may be divided into three main sections. The first of these, from the year 1815 to the year 1832, is an epoch of popular misery and discontent, of struggle and preparation, of reluctance to reform in spite of a growing necessity to do it. The second section, from 1832 to 1850, is an epoch of somewhat similar conditions, but modified by the preponderance of Whig statesmanship instead of Tory, and distinguished by several important measures of reform which eventually removed the principal grievances of the nation. The third section, extending over about a quarter of a century from the year 1850, is an epoch of prosperity, in which the wealth of England grew enormously, and all classes advanced in comfort and security, whilst the political struggle and preparation continued without a break.

The prominent men who have survived all these periods, and have done so much to shape the last epoch of the century, were too young to exert much influence on the generation which fought and won the battle of Parlia-

mentary Reform. Their political careers date from the fourth decade only, and they were little more than inexperienced spectators of the struggle which came to an issue in 1832. Mr. Disraeli did not secure a seat in the House of Commons before 1837. Mr. Gladstone was barely of age when the death of George IV. brought on the General Election of 1830, and made it practicable for a Whig Ministry to assume and retain the direction of affairs. Cobden, the central figure of the Free Trade movement, saw barely thirty years of public life, and took part in the settlement of few questions outside the limits which his convictions and enthusiasm had assigned to him. John Bright alone, of all who have made their names household words in the history of modern statesmanship, and who have been active participators in the work of agitation and legislation, may be regarded as having put on his armour in the first of the periods above enumerated, though he has continued to wear it for years after the third period had come to an end.

Born on 16th November 1811—and being, therefore, younger than either Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Gladstone, or Mr. Cobden—he displayed an ardent interest in politics from his boyhood. He was not twenty years old when he found himself carried away by the fervour of the Reform struggle, and began to exercise the gift of oratory which was so early developed in him. He was not of age when the Reform Bill was passed, but he had already shown the remarkable bent of mind which was to convert him from a simple manufacturer into one of the most single-minded politicians whom England has ever known.

This bent of mind led John Bright in a different direction from that which was to be taken by nearly all his contemporaries. His sympathies were specially, and perhaps in the first instance all but exclusively, with the masses of his fellow-countrymen in their social and domestic con-

cerns ; he desired their enfranchisement and general elevation, and saw that the wretchedness of their condition could best be overcome by inciting them to personal efforts for the amelioration of their lot. The circumstances of the time which intervened between his infancy and his manhood were precisely such as would create and foster this disposition. His heart was moved before his head, and his intellect was engaged on more than one practical question of the day long before he had felt the incentives of personal ambition. He took part, as above mentioned, in political movements and agitations at an age which is usually considered immature in the arena of public life ; and doubtless the young man was often reminded of his youth and reproached with his presumption. From the beginning he seems to have displayed the qualities of his riper years. His eloquence was not marked by complaisance ; nor would that device of many a successful orator have come naturally from the scion of a family of Quakers. He was bluff, blunt, outspoken, and tried to convince by stern applications of moral argument when he could not move his hearers by plainer declarations. In doing this he occasionally wore out the patience of his hearers. It is related of him that he once tried the temper of a rough audience to such a degree that he was hunted from his platform into the neighbouring churchyard, where he had to hold his pursuers at bay amongst the tombstones, until their exasperation had passed away.

It must be left for a future chapter to delineate the character of John Bright's mind and eloquence, and to estimate his value as a popular leader and a politician ; but at the outset it is very desirable to note that his unique personal qualities made him in some sense the founder and leader of a school—the centre and type of a class of public men whose principles have been distinctly recognised and approved by the nation at large, though their interpretation

has varied according to the preconceived opinions of different men. It may possibly at first sight appear to the reader that the subject of the present volume can scarcely be dealt with in any systematic manner, as a narrative of political occurrences, without going over the same ground as that occupied in three former volumes of this Series, and without practically repeating much that has been said before. It is true that the life of John Bright has run side by side with the lives of Gladstone, Disraeli, and Cobden, and that in most of his public relations he was at one time or another in close connection with them. But, on the other hand, there is no necessity to tread in the old foot-marks. As a colleague of Cobden out of the House, and of Mr. Gladstone in the two Administrations of the Liberal Premier, John Bright's personal career must be followed to some extent through a sequence of events to which we have already given our attention; but even here a notable distinction will be observed in the manner of treatment.

Mr. Bright differs from his three great compeers in this particular respect, amongst others—he has never been an administrator of public affairs. He has, indeed, never chosen to be an administrator, though at one stage in his life he accepted a position in the Government from which he retired after a very short experience of the cares of a Department. The other three men were, in their different ways, adroit and active administrators, and it was necessary that their work should be traced with some degree of detail. The same necessity does not exist in the case of Mr. Bright. He has always been a man of ideas and principles more than of action; he has been an orator rather than a Minister, a counsellor and teacher rather than a director and manager of men. Thus we shall do more justice to our subject by taking account of the movements whereof he was one of the originating forces, and of the political ideas which he embraced and interpreted to his fellow-countrymen, than

by adopting a mode of consecutive narration to which there would be more than one sufficient objection.

True statesmanship without the talent or the desire for active administration is not only possible, but it is from certain points of view the loftiest kind of all. It frequently indicates what the men of action accept and carry out. It converts the masses as mere Parliamentary tact and skill, however great, can never do, and renders reform a possibility which, not long before, had been deemed impracticable or chimerical. It reaches far into the future, and travels over distant realms of thought, often paying the penalty of ridicule and temporary neglect, until by a gradual process the men of talent and energy, slow to enlarge their faith, but quick to put in operation a programme once adopted, achieve in Parliament what the higher statesmanship had accomplished in the mental and moral domain.

This is the kind of service which Mr. Bright, especially in the earlier and middle stages of his career, has performed for his countrymen. He has thought boldly and spoken boldly. He has grasped great principles, and preached great truths, and "cut prejudice against the grain," years and almost generations before the more successful politicians have ventured to embody the same ideas in legislative proposals. And he has done this, for the most part, in the broadest possible spirit, even when he laid himself open to the charge of narrowness from narrowly critical minds. If he has led a crusade against war, stigmatising it as "multitudinous murder," declaring it to be all but invariably wicked and ineffectual, and using arguments which have been described as pusillanimous or "huckstering," he has at the same time shown what the practical alternative to war might be in a magnanimous and well-governed State. If he has appeared to lay the chief stress upon commercial and municipal concerns, and endeavoured to contract our national responsibilities to the development of our own trade

and agriculture, he has done much to show Englishmen how grand an empire may be built up on the foundation of international commerce and good-will. If he has seemed to devote his mind to the kind of issues which go to make up what are sometimes called "vestry politics," he has also proved himself capable of taking the very widest sweep of the political horizon. His conclusions and criticisms in respect of Indian administration, and of the foreign policy of the country at various epochs, have been as valuable as his strictures on the Game Laws, or on the problems of economy and reform.

It is, however, especially on matters relating to what may be justly styled the imperial policy of peace that John Bright has made his stand in the political world. This policy has been his deliberate choice, and the outcome (so far as he is personally affected) of his most deliberate convictions. The "Peace party" has looked to him as its best exponent and leader, and he has never shirked the responsibilities which have been imposed on him by the leadership. His influence on the masses of his countrymen may seem to have been less potent, and at any rate it has been less immediately effectual in this than in other matters; and he has certainly sacrificed much to his consistency in an unpopular cause. Not that the peace policy is beyond question unpopular amongst the numerical majority of Englishmen; but it has been unacceptable to the classes which have exercised political power, and above all to the class of politicians who have found their way into the House of Commons. His action in regard to the Crimean War cost him his seat for Manchester, and at that period he was plainly out of harmony with the prevailing spirit of the nation. Many years passed before he and his friends recovered from the check which they then suffered in the estimation of their countrymen—or of the more unreflecting classes of their countrymen; but in so far as he has re-

covered, the fact has been due to the acceptance of his views by large classes of Englishmen, and not by any retrogression on his part from the position which he had taken up. He had been accused, as we shall see, of advocating "peace at any price," the insinuation being that he would prefer peace to war even at the cost of dishonour, or of a weak compliance with an enemy's demands. The allegation has been met and repudiated; and yet there is a sense in which Mr. Bright has never denied that he would choose a peaceful settlement of international disputes whenever this could be obtained at a price which it might be legitimate and possible to pay.

The main benefits of peace as contrasted with war—apart from the moral considerations of the case—are that it enables the country to economise its resources, and to proceed without interruption on a course of national development. Thus the policy of peace is intimately associated with the policies of economy and domestic reform. The most familiar watchword of the Liberal party—though Conservatives not unreasonably maintain that their rivals can have no monopoly in a cry so intrinsically just and unexceptionable—consists of this phrase: "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." No other motto could express with equal distinctness the character of Mr. Bright's political creed, or the attitude of his mind towards the public questions of the day, as interpreted by his speeches and actions. These are the three corner-stones of the edifice of Liberal statesmanship which he has been so largely instrumental in raising—an edifice which, under his hands, was originally described by his opponents as Radicalism, not to say Chartism, but which has since risen to the level of official Liberalism, and even, amongst a certain class of the community, of something not much more robust than Parliamentary Whiggism.

This, then, will be the ground on which we shall take our

stand in the following pages. We shall trace the career of Mr. Bright and his chief political associates by noting the development of the problems of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform—which is, in fact, the development of English politics during half a century. In the course of our survey we shall find that the opinions of our public men on both sides, like the opinions of the people generally, have broadened gradually and slowly down, from the time of the first Reform Act to the present day, until the men of the classes who were the “extreme Liberals” of fifty years back have become the “moderate Liberals” of our own age, whilst many theories then considered to be hazardous and wild are now accepted as necessary, harmless, and even Conservative tenets. Our method of examination will be more discursive and disjointed than would be the case with an ordinary biography—which is not here attempted; but it may be hoped that the result will be to supplement and complete the description of our nineteenth century politics, as presented in the lives of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield, and in the sketch of Cobden and the Free Traders.





CHAPTER II.

A LONG REVOLUTION (1790-1832).

THE English Constitution was pieced together during many centuries when neither peace nor retrenchment nor reform could have been accepted as a watchword of any political party within the limits of the State—not because the ideas were unknown or the words unused, but because the realities which they express were unattainable by any effort which the people could put forth.

There are, indeed, analogies between our own times and the times of our ancestors in various ages. They made their struggles for peace, and yet more frequently nursed their fervent aspirations for peace. Especially in epochs of revulsion, as after the exhausting Barons' wars, or after the many wars against the French and the Scots, or after the Civil War of the seventeenth century, they clung to the hope that the sheathed sword would long continue in its scabbard, and that generations of quietness at home and peace abroad would enable them to rid themselves of the burden, often terribly heavy, imposed upon them by the folly of the governing classes or the aggression of their monarchs. Sometimes this desire for quietude and rest put them off their guard against possible enemies, and so

brought the men of peace into discredit, very much as the peace party has been discredited in our own days. The successes of the Dutch fleets during the Commonwealth were probably due in some measure to the relaxation of the popular mind after the short and sanguinary struggle between Charles the First and the Parliament. The same kind of influence may have tended to bring about the deterioration of our fighting power under the Georges, after the great sacrifices made by the nation at the instance of William of Orange, and in the reign of Queen Anne. At all events we have had our epochs when many Englishmen were almost inclined to accept a peace at any price rather than embark in a new war; but up to the present century we never had, as a nation, the making of war in our own hands. It was the affair of monarchs, or of the aristocratic surroundings of the Court, against which the commonalty had no means of effectually protesting. Wars were made to protect or increase the royal domains on the Continent, or to settle rival claims to the English crown, or to subdue Scotland and Ireland, or to assist foreign allies, or, as at the end of the last century, to curb the growing power of the French Republic, from which the European sovereigns apprehended danger to themselves.

Only one great war before the establishment of Ministerial responsibility and efficient representation can be said to have been waged by Englishmen for the direct interests of the masses of the people; and that was a civil war levied by Parliament against the King's Government.

Of course this does not prove that the people themselves would not have initiated wars of aggression, or of passion, if the power had been in their own hands. There is every reason to think that they would have done so, and no doubt they sanctioned or acquiesced in many wars of the monarchs' making. Parliamentary majorities supported Pitt in his long struggle with France; and if it be said that at this

time the representation of the masses was very inadequate, and that it was really the aristocracy and plutocracy which gave Pitt his chief support, a later and more notable instance of popular passion is supplied by the Crimean War, twenty years after the first extension of the franchise.

Granting all this, it remains to be said, as the advocates of a peace policy justly contend, that the people are accountable for fewer wars in proportion to their influence than may be laid to the charge of the Crown and its Ministers; that the masses of the population are not even yet sufficiently represented, so that the very orders which suffer most from war have no voice in preventing it; that education and experience will make the majority of the taxpayers less inclined each year to listen to aggressive counsels, or to indulge their animosities. It must not, therefore, be concluded that a nation having the full option of peace or war, and fully instructed as to the liabilities in which the choice of war would involve it, is as likely to appeal to arms as the Government of a despotic or monarchical State. On the contrary, we may be assured that the self-governing nation is far less likely, in the long run, to go to war when it has the chance of peacefully settling its disputes.

Now, these arguments are virtually as old as any of the principles of political science, and they have been more or less clearly understood by thoughtful Englishmen for many generations. Amongst the objects aimed at by our ancestors in every age, and particularly during the forty or fifty years of quiet revolution ending with the first Reform Act, has been the self-control which would enable us to abandon the worst precedents and traditions of war, and to secure the vast advantages resulting from settled peace. The so-called peace policy was not created by Mr. Bright or by any of his contemporaries. It has existed during many generations in England, and has exercised an influence, sometimes

manifest, sometimes only implied, on the more enlightened men in every age.

With the aspiration for peace came also, as a matter of course, the desire for greater economy in the expenditure of the State. This was doubtless one of the main incentives in many minds to the pursuit of peaceful relations with other countries ; for the pecuniary penalties of war must at all times be amongst the most conspicuous and acutely felt. The drafting off of the population was an evil severe enough in its effects, especially in protracted wars, to afflict the whole people in a grievous manner, and to make the iron enter into their souls. But the sacrifices imposed upon them, and the grinding taxation to which they were subjected in order to pay for barons' wars, dynastic wars, and wars due to the folly of unwise Governments, must have taught a bitter lesson to every taxpaying individual, in proportion to his poverty and want of resources. There are abundant instances in English history of the exasperation produced by poll tax, ship money, forced loans, and taxes of various degrees of oppression ; and the exasperation was not unfrequently succeeded by resistance and rebellion.

As the people began to gain political power, the Commons assumed to themselves the right of appropriating the money of the taxpayers to its special objects ; and on this power, once theoretically admitted, they built up the inestimable privilege of making their grants of money depend upon the redress of popular grievances. They were enabled to do this the more readily because the monarch personally, and not merely the crown in a technical sense, was the recipient of a large amount of the money raised by taxation. If it were only a case of providing means for the effectual management of the nation's affairs, and if the representatives of the taxpayers simply had to vote so many millions for the public services of the State, there would be a virtual absurdity in stopping Supply for the redress of grievances.

This highly-valued feature of the English Constitution owed its origin to the appropriation of vast sums of money to the use of the monarch for the time being; and the present force of the custom is due in great measure to the fact that we still tax ourselves to provide for a Royal Family and a Court.

It is clear that the Commons, whilst imposing this contract upon the monarch, made some sacrifice of their control over the various items of expenditure; for they could not treat the supply of money as a set-off against the removal of a grievance and at the same time reserve a full power of criticising and limiting the supply in details. But as the necessity for withholding money has grown less and less urgent, the control of expenditure has become more effectual.

In place of bringing things to a dead-lock by tying the national purse-strings, as Parliament did in the age of the Stuarts, we can now exert sufficient pressure for all ordinary purposes by the simpler device of motions on going into Committee of Supply; and thus our strength is not exhausted when we come to discuss the actual votes in Committee. The change indicates a considerable progress in popular privilege and self-government, and marks a large advance in the evolution of the State.

Retrenchment cannot be said to have been looked upon as one of the most important elements in the policy of English statesmen — Liberal or Conservative — until the people had conquered all the chief outposts of political power, including the fairly adequate representation conferred upon them in 1832. From that date there have always been "economists" in the House of Commons, in the present Parliamentary sense of the term — members pledged, like Joseph Hume and his successors, to war with official extravagance or incompetence, and discharging their task by minute examination of every item in the Estimates.

It would be a long business to trace the gradual develop-

ment of what is now a well-recognised and very serviceable function in the popular House of Parliament. Of course there were economists who were thorns in the side of Pitt, as there had been economists before Pitt's time; and their voices were heard whenever a great military expenditure was contemplated or carried out. The increase of the National Debt was a constant cause of alarm to the more prudent statesmen of the eighteenth century; and Walpole's efforts to reduce the amount bear witness perhaps less to his own zeal for economy than to his desire to give satisfaction to a certain well-defined public opinion on the subject. The Sinking Fund was an ingenious device which commended itself to many economical theorists of the Georgian epoch, and it would have been more effectual in securing the desired object if it had not been combined with and counteracted by other schemes of a less sound and sober character. At the same time it attests the strength and promise of the movement which had already made considerable progress when the great revolutionary wave swept over the face of Europe, and set at nought the calculations of the earlier political economists. The policy adopted by Pitt, and sanctioned by the ruling classes in England, made economy impossible; for the practical basis of that policy was a lavish expenditure of money, at home and abroad, for the purpose of subduing, first the Revolution, and then the military power of Napoleon.

This quarter of a century of war and foreign subsidies may be said to have utterly debauched English opinion on the question of public expenditure. Men were persuaded or hardened into believing that the rapid and enormous growth of the National Debt was a matter of little consequence to themselves or to their posterity, and they did not doubt that the ultimate humiliation of the French was worth the hundreds of millions which might be spent in bringing it to pass. There was certainly more reason for

such a belief in 1810 than there had been in 1793 ; for if we had no right or need to crush the first Republic, there was every justification for the concerted action of the Powers in overthrowing Napoleon Bonaparte. Be this as it may, there were vast numbers of Englishmen in the first decades of the nineteenth century who saw with comparative indifference the monstrous accumulation of the Debt, which had risen from £600,000 in 1688 to £102,000,000 in 1760, and to more than eight hundred millions sterling at the close of the Napoleonic wars.

Retrenchment began to assume a systematic form when the epoch of peace had fairly set in. The ten years of the reign of George the Fourth saw a reduction of the National Debt by as much as fifty millions ; but this rate of improvement was not maintained. It was then that private members of Parliament and individual controversialists, finding that statesmen were powerless to relieve the nation of its burdens on a large scale, devoted themselves to humbler and less ambitious efforts, and took in hand the *minutiae* of official expenditure. Joseph Hume and his brother economists were jeered at for their triviality and apparent ignorance, and they came to be known as the cheeseparings school. But it was no mere ignorance which inspired these men. They saw how much was occasionally done by protests and demonstrations, by making a stand on a principle, however petty the circumstances in which the principle was involved. And no doubt they did great good in an indirect manner, and earned the thanks of their discerning fellow-countrymen, in that and succeeding generations. No one in the present day who admits the supreme importance of a policy of retrenchment will be inclined to deny the value of the services rendered by the earlier groups of "cheeseparers."

By the time that Mr. Bright began to take a prominent part in politics, economical science had made up most of the

ground lost during the epoch of war. Retrenchment had taken rank as a policy deserving the most serious attention of statesmen, and as an item in the recognised programme of Reformers in general, but of advanced Liberal Reformers more particularly. As we shall hereafter see, the necessity of economy in the public services was dwelt upon by Bright, Cobden, and other members of the same school, in connection with most of their Parliamentary demands; and the contentions of this school were urged on the broadest and firmest grounds of statesmanlike argument. Where Hume had been a demonstrator in matters of detail, Bright was the expounder of a theory, the elucidator of principles, the deducer of sound and irrefragable conclusions. Hume said: "This thousand pounds is badly spent or needlessly demanded. You are not getting value for the money of this hundred taxpayers; I move that the vote be reduced by fifty pounds sterling." Bright said: "You are spending so many millions on the Army, so many on the Navy, so many for petty wars which are not just, and so many for petty pomps which do us no good. He is not worthy the name of an Administrator who cannot govern this empire at a cost of sixty millions a-year."

The distinction between the two modes of controversy is manifest, and it is impossible to doubt where the superior statesmanship was revealed. John Bright could not touch any question, or devote himself to any class of topics, without manifesting the statesmanlike breadth of his mind.

It was the same with the subject of Parliamentary Reform, the movement in favour of which passed through like phases with the agitation for national economy. A demand for better representation had been made in England before the outbreak of the French Revolution and the European war; and with the return of peace the popular aspirations revived. The condition of the country in the ten or twelve years succeeding the Treaty of Vienna was deplorable; a

cry of discontent was raised from every class of the community. In the case of the landlords, and a few monopolists who made a tacit compact with the landlords, a partial remedy was found against the universal depression; but this was only because these classes had the control of both Houses of Parliament, and were able to pass laws which conferred exclusive benefit upon themselves. It was natural, therefore, that the remaining classes should lay claim to a share in the privileges of legislation and self-government.

The particular movement which came to a crisis after the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill in 1829, and which found its issue in 1832—between which dates Mr. Bright first threw himself into the arena of political strife—must be dealt with in a separate chapter; but it may be observed that the Reform Act carried by Lord Grey by no means exhausted the demand which was made by intelligent and prudent Englishmen for an adequate popular representation. The Act in question was only a compromise, and the demand was renewed on the morrow of its inscription in the statute-book; not merely by the eager spirits who could never be satisfied by any compromise of principle and theory, but even by responsible and official statesmen of the Whig party.

Thus it was that, in the earliest years of the Reformed Parliament, from 1833 onward—though in a larger and more comprehensive sense some ten or fifteen years later than the date just mentioned—the platform of “Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform” came to be generally adopted by the Liberal party. As a watchword and party motto, the phrase is peculiarly appropriate to the standpoint which was taken up by Cobden and the Manchester School, and by John Bright as the most eloquent and efficacious exponent of their doctrine.



CHAPTER III

THE DEMAND FOR REFORM.

THE advocates of Parliamentary Reform, in whose ranks John Bright enrolled himself as soon as he had attained the age of manhood, occupied a very different position in 1830 from that which had been occupied by their predecessors fifty years before. The anomalies of popular representation in the third decade of the present century were altogether unprecedented ; and it is very difficult for the men of these days to appreciate the feelings with which their fathers and grandfathers regarded the movement.

Imagine a condition of affairs in which two hundred and fifty individual Englishmen, all large landowners and monopolists, and most of them having a hereditary seat in the House of Lords, held in their hands as a pure matter of property, valued at so many pounds sterling, the nomination of a majority of members in the House of Commons. Imagine these two hundred and fifty directors of England in a position to dictate every important law, and quite disposed to use their power. Remember that they were so debauched by the fact of carrying the interests and welfare of Englishmen about with them in their pockets that they had lost all sense of the injustice of the arrangement, and

really believed that things were ordered for the best by an over-watching Providence, and by the wisdom of their own ancestors. And remember, further, that for a long time this travesty of feudal organisation existed with but slight protest on the part of public opinion. Men were found amongst the excluded classes of society who boasted that the country virtually governed itself by what was called a system of "indirect representation," inasmuch as the members of Parliament returned for the pocket-boroughs, by purchase or nomination, were generally such as would have got themselves returned if the same boroughs had been open to all comers.

It is true that the bargain for a seat nearly always implied that the chosen candidate would vote in accordance with the views of the proprietor ; but this fact was not supposed to touch the practical question, especially as the Whig land-owners commanded almost as many boroughs as the Tories. So strong was the tendency to rest content with matters as they stood, and so deep at the same time was the despair of setting them right if they were believed to be wrong, that the aspiration for reform frequently dwindled down to a vanishing point. When the prosperity of the country diminished, and money became scarce, the Reformers made themselves troublesome ; but when the sun of prosperity shone out again, the energies of the Reformers were once more relaxed. In 1821 as many as nineteen petitions for a change in the representative system were presented to Parliament ; in 1822 there were twelve, and in 1823 there were twenty-nine. During the next six years, when the prospects of the country seemed to be a little brighter, not one petition was sent up in favour of reform ; but in 1830, after a sudden relapse of prosperity, the number of petitions jumped up to fourteen.*

* Sir A. Alison, *History of Europe*, 1815-52, ch. 22.

Not that the theorists and the convinced Reformers went to sleep in the most prosperous periods; but they found that the general public opinion was at such times less willing to support their efforts.

In order, however, to understand the actual state of affairs under this "indirect representation," we must recall the condition and circumstances of the classes who were excluded from all participation in the government of England; and it is in so doing that we realise the change which had occurred in the elements of the problem since it was mooted by the theorists of the eighteenth century.

The European war had enabled many men to make large fortunes. The chief sufferers by this war—setting loss of life and the increased cost of living on one side—were the poorest classes of all, or the persons who had no means of extending their incomes, or the members of special trades which were injured or ruined by the chaotic state of the Continent. But there were many trades, on the other hand, which felt a very beneficial effect from the unceasing and unlimited armaments of the world. In spite of all that Napoleon could do against us, England drove a good trade with most foreign countries (not excepting France herself) during a large part of the revolutionary epoch; and of course the iron and other factories profited by immense Government orders at home. Thousands, again, made their fortunes by the wholesale supply of food, clothing, and the countless accessories of equipment and commissariat. Contractors and sub-contractors flourished at every turn; and the vast operations of the national loans put money into the pockets of thousands more.

Thus it came about that in 1815, when the quarter of a century of warfare and speculation was at an end, whole classes of wealthy and well-to-do men had taken their place in society, and secured a great stake in the country, who, through the inequalities and anomalies of the representative

system, had no formal status as citizens except by the payment of taxation. A man had no vote until he obtained a qualification, and the mere possession of money was not in all cases sufficient to purchase one, even if the possessor went out of his way to obtain it. In many boroughs it was necessary to be a freeman or burgess; but the fact was that some of the wealthiest and most populous boroughs were altogether unrepresented, whilst old and petty places returned one or two members.

This inequality gave rise to great dissatisfaction, and as it was especially amongst the thriving and energetic classes that the grievance was felt, they made their complaint heard and respected. "If it is true," says Sir A. Alison, "that knowledge is power, still more is it true that wealth is power; and in the great commercial cities of Britain both these were combined, without the constitution giving their inhabitants any channel by which they might make their influence felt by the Government. . . . In early times it had been obviated by the practice which prevailed of sending writs to each borough or village which had become considerable, commanding them to send burgesses to Parliament. But this practice, which was entirely in harmony with the spirit of the constitution, had long fallen into desuetude, since it had been discovered that a majority in the House of Commons gave the party possessing it the command of the State; and now the great towns, many of which had quadrupled in population and wealth during the preceding quarter of a century, remained without representation; while vast numbers of little boroughs, which had declined with the changes of time to a mere fraction of their former inhabitants, still sent members to Parliament, many of them at the dictation, or in pursuance of the sale, of a neighbouring magnate."*

* *History of Europe*, ch. 22.

The monopoly of legislation here referred to, which resulted from the non-enfranchisement of new towns, had existed since the reign of Charles the Second. Between 1673 and 1832 not a single Parliamentary borough was created, and thus the power of legislation, and the control of the entire system of government, was jealously kept in the hands of the great landowners, who possessed the "pocket" and "rotten" boroughs. The monopolists had a direct pecuniary interest in keeping up this exclusive policy, and they turned a deaf ear to the populous towns which demanded to be placed on a level with Old Sarum and Winchelsea.

It was in the midst of the great manufacturing centres of Lancashire that John Bright passed his early years, and imbibed his first political ideas; and it is not surprising that he should have made this question of extended franchise the arena of his youthful energy. The facts on which he must have based his principles of Reform were so startling that one can scarcely understand how, even in the most prosperous times, the public opinion of England could remain quiescent on the subject. The apathy of Parliament itself is easy to comprehend, but even in the popular newspapers of the day one finds little to indicate that the scandal was viewed in its real proportions.

The evils, so far as the representation of boroughs was concerned, were of two kinds, affecting on the one hand the class of towns represented, and on the other hand the class of the electors in each borough. As the first evil consisted in the monopoly of governing power by wealthy individuals, the last consisted in the monopoly of representative power by the corporations. Here, again, the fault was not in the original laws or royal ordinances of enfranchisement, but in the abuse or neglect which had overridden them. It had been the regular custom to summon burgesses from every town which attained sufficient importance; and the elective

right had been defined by the House of Commons in the reign of James the First as belonging to every resident householder paying "scot and lot" within the borough. Both these rights had been defeated under the later Stuarts, and had remained in abeyance throughout the eighteenth century.

Thus it happened that, previous to the passing of the Reform Act of 1832, the majority of boroughs elected their representatives through their more or less close corporations; some had grown so small as to deserve the appellation of "rotten," which was commonly applied to them; and others, though still numbering their voters by scores or hundreds, were entirely in the hands of the local landowners, who nominated their candidates according to their caprice. Of Grimsby, in Lincolnshire, it is recorded that the electoral right was conferred on every man who married the daughter of a freeman, so that many marriages used to be celebrated on the eve of an election for the express purpose of securing the return of the candidates favoured by the families of the brides. The borough of Old Sarum, near the more modern town of Salisbury, contained twelve inhabitants—having in fact been a deserted site for several centuries; yet it returned two members; and Lord Camelford, who owned it at a certain period, is credited with the contemptuous remark that "if the House of Commons were not satisfied with his members, the next time he would nominate a couple of sweeps."

"Rotten boroughs were put up publicly for sale; Jews and Catholics were not allowed to sit in Parliament, but if they had cash enough no one could prevent them from purchasing rotten boroughs, and thereby exercising a direct influence on politics. In 1714, Lady Montague wrote thus to her husband: 'The best thing will be to entrust a certain sum to a good friend, and buy a small Cornwall borough.' In 1761 the 'nabobs' entered the field as purchasers; in

1766 the borough of Sudbury was publicly put up for sale. Winchelsea, in 1784, had but three voters, and was the property of a rich nabob; the borough of Bossiney, in Cornwall, had one voter only. A borough which had been swallowed up by the sea still continued to be represented; the owner of the beach on which it had stood rowed out in a boat with three voters, and there played out the electoral farce. In 1790 there were thirty boroughs with 375 voters, which sent sixty members to the lower House—amongst them Tiverton, with its fourteen voters, Tavistock, having only ten freeholders, and St. Michael's, with seven scot and lot voters, returned one member each." *

Sir T. Erskine May, in his *Constitutional History of England*, gives a succinct account of the system by which the "representatives of the people" were returned to Parliament, and of the height to which its abuses had grown before the Reform Bill was introduced. Of the cost of a seat in the House of Commons he cites some very remarkable instances; though at the same time he suggests that this custom of purchase was at least preferable to the general corruption of the electors, and to the more prevalent practice of nomination. "To buy a seat in Parliament was often the only means by which an independent member could gain admission to the House." The reader will be disposed to think that the very cogency of this excuse is as strong a condemnation as could be uttered of the corruptness of the system.

The borough of Sudbury, "infamous for its corruption," used to "advertise itself for sale." Ludgershall was sold by George Selwyn for £9000. The average price of boroughs was said to have been raised by the competition of East and West Indians from £2500 to £4000 or £5000. Northampton (now noted for its preference for poor candidates) received

* Fischel, *The English Constitution*.

as much as £30,000 from each side; whilst Lord Spencer disbursed £70,000 over a single election for the same borough. This was in the middle of the last century; but facts equally startling are recorded of later times. "Within the memory of some men still living, an election for the county of York has been known to cost upwards of £150,000." In 1807, a contest for the same county cost close upon a quarter of a million sterling.*

Scotland, in the year 1831, had an electoral body numbering no more than four thousand voters. Argyllshire, with a population of 100,000, had 115 electors. Caithness, with a population of 30,000, had no more than eleven resident voters, and thirty-six out-voters. "Edinburgh and Glasgow, the two first cities of Scotland, had each a constituency of thirty-three persons." The natural consequence of such a state of things was that the mass of the people were comparatively indifferent to Parliamentary elections, in which they had so little concern or interest; and it is to be observed that the excluded classes contained nearly all the intelligence and very much of the wealth and best influence of the community. Bute, with a population of 14,000, had only one resident elector, who (within the present century) constituted himself a public meeting, and returned himself to Parliament.

"Such being the state of the representation in the United Kingdom," Sir T. Erskine May observes, "an actual majority of the members of the House of Commons were returned by an inconsiderable number of persons. According to a statement made by the Duke of Richmond in 1780, not more than 6000 men returned a clear majority of the House of Commons. It was alleged in the petition of the Society of Friends of the People, presented by Mr. Grey in 1793, that eighty-four individuals absolutely returned 157 members to Parliament; that seventy influential men

* Sir T. Erskine May, vol. i. p. 355 (Sixth Edition).

secured the return of 150 members; and that in this manner 307 members—being the majority of the House, before the union with Ireland—were returned to Parliament by 154 patrons, of whom forty were peers. In 1821 Mr. Lambton stated that he was prepared to prove by evidence, at the bar of the House of Commons, ‘that 180 individuals returned, by nomination or otherwise, 350 members.’”*

These were the facts on which the Reformers based their irresistible demands. It was from such an armoury of shameful and almost incredible details that Mr. Bright, coming young and fresh to a matter which for his elders was a thrice-told tale, would derive the weapons of his earliest public speeches and controversies.

The Reform movement, as we have seen, was lulled to rest during much of the third decade of the century; but in 1830 it sprang into renewed activity. 1829 was the year of Catholic Emancipation, which was carried by the aid of the Whigs against a Tory Ministry. The Duke of Wellington had yielded on this point, according to his admitted principle, in order to avoid the worse alternative of civil war; and the Opposition, as though invigorated by their first great victory, immediately threw down the new gage of battle. The Whigs, in short, had opened their campaign for the acquisition of power and office, and thus even the owners of pocket-boroughs began to brace themselves for the abandonment of their property, in the hope that they would strike a fatal blow at their political rivals, and oust them from their long-enjoyed supremacy. The agitation which had hitherto been merely popular, and often democratic, was henceforth sanctioned by many of the aristocrats against whom it was practically directed.

It is true that some advantage was gained for the new cause in the first instance by reason of the animosity

* P. 361.

created by the emancipation of the Catholics, which brought about a certain division in the ranks of both parties, and contributed largely to the fall of the Duke of Wellington's Ministry. But the main strength of the movement was in its inherent justice, and in the depth of the popular feeling when fairly aroused. The tactics of the Whigs and the resentment of Tory Protestantism were aids without which the measure of 1832 would have been still longer delayed ; but they would not suffice by themselves to account for the force and finality of the struggle.

It was in the session of 1830, amidst frequent attacks by coalescing members of all parties upon the Duke of Wellington's Government, that the Parliamentary campaign was fairly opened. In the previous year a motion for Reform had been defeated by 129 votes to 55 ; but now Lord Howick's motion was lost on a division by 126 to 99—thus showing a remarkable advance on the question. A few weeks later Lord John Russell secured a following of 140 in favour of enfranchising the towns of Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham. As yet the official leaders of the Whigs had not ranged themselves on the side of the Reformers, so that these large minorities were all the more significant.

Outside the House the agitation was carried on in a thoroughly resolute manner—another proof that the movement was no mere intrigue of one ruling class against its rivals. Political unions were established in many large towns, for the purpose of enlightening the public mind and fostering the energies of the people. The death of George the Fourth furnished an opportunity for the country to reveal the change which had come over it ; and the constituencies responded to the appeal by returning a Whig majority. This party, which could scarcely have aspired to office in the previous reign, when the monarch was bitterly opposed to it, now saw that its hopes were about to be accomplished ; but it was necessary, in the first place, to

dislodge the Duke of Wellington from office. The Tory Premier began the new session by a royal message entirely ignoring the question of Reform, and his speech in the Upper House expressly, and even aggressively, declared his hostility to any measure of the kind. But the temper of the country and of the House of Commons was too strong for the Duke. He suffered one defeat on Sir Henry Parnell's motion for a retrenchment of the Civil List, and then resigned office on the very evening when Brougham was to have opened a debate on Parliamentary Reform.

No one, as Miss Martineau writes in the *History of the Thirty Years' Peace*, had any doubt as to who would be the Duke's successors. "It was well understood that the great day was at hand when the British polity was to renew its youth and replenish its life. Some who walked homewards from their Parliamentary halls to their own firesides, through the darkness of that November night, told each other that a brighter sun than that of midsummer was to arise to-morrow, encumbered and dimmed at first, probably, by clouds and vapours, but destined to send down its vital warmth and light through long vistas of remote generations."





CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST REFORM ACT.

EARL GREY was an old man when the King called upon him to assume office, but he had many special qualifications for the position of Prime Minister, and he had been designated for that post by general opinion as soon as it was known how the elections had gone. He had in his favour the excellent record that he had declared for electoral reform in the preceding century, when the question was by no means so easy for a Whig aristocrat to deal with. He now accepted office on the condition that he should make the reform of Parliament his first and chief object; and the King assented to this condition in a manner which virtually committed him to support Lord Grey in the very arduous task which he had undertaken. William the Fourth was just the man for the situation. If he could not always avoid the prejudices and blunders into which his predecessor had fallen, yet he came to the throne already half-persuaded to think that an extension of the franchise was a necessity. At any rate he was sufficiently loyal to the Whigs as long as the Cabinet was strong and united; and he kept his pledge to Lord Grey by using his personal influence with the peers at the critical moment.

The new Cabinet was one which commanded the confidence of the constituencies, and of the Reform party in particular. It contained all the men who had been most prominent as advocates of the popular cause, and who had in recent years insisted on the necessity of a change in the representative system. Lord Althorp, who was in favour of the ballot, and an eager advocate of economy, led the Commons as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Brougham, a very popular man, though an indifferent lawyer, was made Lord Chancellor. Lord Lansdowne claimed a place in the Cabinet as an hereditary Whig magnate; Lord Durham as a popular Radical peer. Amongst the friends and disciples of Canning were Lords Melbourne, Palmerston, and Goderich—two future and one late Premier. Sir James Graham, Lords Holland and Carlisle, Mr. Grant, and—strange as it seems—the Duke of Richmond, made up this Cabinet of Reform. Lord John Russell, who, like Mr. Bright, belongs to the second Reform period rather than (or as much as) to the first, held a subordinate position in the Government. It is to be observed that only one member of the Cabinet of fifteen was a pure Commoner; and all but two were peers or the sons of peers!

There was little disposition in the first instance amongst the advanced Liberals to complain of any want of thoroughness in the Ministerial list. It was enough for the moment that a Government was in power which would carry out the wishes of the people, and would in fact give the people what it had hitherto lacked—an adequate representation in Parliament. All things were to be possible for the masses when they had once secured the lever of political power. The new era was to be dated from 1831. The golden age of liberty was to be inaugurated from the moment when the Reform Act should be inscribed in the statute-book.

It can hardly be said that the anticipations were extravagantly sanguine, or that they have not been in great measure

fulfilled ; but of course there was a margin for disappointment between the first aspirations of the reformers and the final accomplishment. Some of the more ardent spirits had gone to the root of the matter at once, and raised demands which their grandsons were scarcely able to achieve after a lapse of nearly forty years. Take for instance the plan of Brougham, drawn up on the eve of his elevation to the Chancellorship. It was in the character of a compromise, but one clause at least was far too liberal for adoption at that time. According to this scheme, all copyholders and landholders were to have votes ; and all householders, whatever the rent or value of their houses. Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Glasgow, Birmingham, and other large towns were to be enfranchised. The rotten boroughs were to lose one vote, retaining one. Out-voters in towns were to be disfranchised, but not in counties. Freemen kept the franchise, qualifying after a residence of six months. Elections were to be concluded in one day. The House was to have five hundred members, whereof Ireland was to send eighty and Scotland forty-five.

The best clause in this scheme was that which gave a vote to householders ; and it would have saved a great deal of trouble in the future if the Cabinet had accepted it. As it was, the measure introduced, and substantially carried through Parliament, was in some respects more drastic than this plan of Brougham's, whilst in other respects it was more timid. It disfranchised sixty boroughs returning 119 members. It took one member from forty-seven boroughs, and two from Weymouth, which had had the exceptional privilege of returning four. It gave two members each to Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Greenwich, Sheffield, Sunderland, and Wolverhampton, and one each to twenty other towns. The representation of the metropolis was raised from eight to eighteen, whilst twenty-seven counties were subdivided in such a manner as to increase the county

representation by as many as fifty-five votes. Thus a large majority of the new seats were given over to the territorial interest, which was the less demurred to by the Radicals, because nearly all the cancelled votes had been under aristocratic influence.

As for the qualifications which were henceforth to confer the right of voting, they were conceived in what must be considered as a fairly liberal spirit. A uniform rental qualification of £10 a-year was established. In counties a vote was given to copyholders of the value of £10, holders of land to the value of £50, and forty-shilling freeholders. These, with provisions for registration of voters and the simplification of elections, made up the substance of the Bill so far as concerned England. The qualification in Scotland and Ireland was assimilated to that of England; the former country receiving five additional members, and Ireland one. The aggregate result was to add half-a-million electors to the former 400,000. The newly-created boroughs in England were estimated to contain 50,000 voters; the old boroughs received an accession of 110,000; London, 95,000; the counties, 100,000; Scotland, 60,000; and Ireland, 40,000.

The second reading of this Bill, as introduced in the session of 1831, was carried by a vote of 312 to 311; but on going into Committee a majority of eight refused to sanction the diminution of the whole number of members of Parliament from 658 to 596. Ministers therefore determined, after much deliberation, to dissolve; and the King was with difficulty brought to accede to their proposal. The circumstances of the general election which followed will always be memorable in English history. The popular enthusiasm for reform had by this time become intense, and the whole country was plunged into an excitement rarely equalled by any condition short of civil war. The Reformers had taken for their motto, "The Bill, the whole Bill, and

nothing but the Bill," and to this cry the vast majority rallied. It is a fact that in the first instance, when the measure was explained in Parliament, even the boldest Liberals and Radicals were surprised, as well as delighted, by its thoroughness; and they would naturally see that the best policy for them to adopt would be to cling to the scheme in the shape which the Cabinet had given to it. Their friends in the constituencies—John Bright at Rochdale, and many like him throughout the country—recognised the same fact, and made the same demand.

The election of 1831, which took place in June, was in itself a political education for the classes who were on the eve of enfranchisement. "By the time the elections were to take place," writes Miss Martineau,* "tens of thousands of working-men knew something more than the mere names of Russell, Grey, and Brougham, and their leading opponents: they knew their ways of thinking and speaking, their aims and their plans; and this was an inestimable help in showing such political students what to do. It is true few of these novices were very wise on their great subject, and a multitude were ignorant and prejudiced; some wished for foreign war, and some for civil war, as a vent for their own pugnacity; some were for persecuting their neighbours who differed from them; and others drew glorious pictures of wealth they should all enjoy when every man had a vote, and had voted away all the taxes; but even the most ignorant and unreasonable were in a better condition than before—more able to understand reason—more fit to be influenced by their wiser neighbours—better qualified to trust the authors and influential promoters of the great measure. As for the higher orders of non-electors, the intelligent men of the towns—by combining their lights they easily saw what to do. They combined their will,

* *Thirty Years' Peace*, ii., 436.

their knowledge, and their manifest force, in political unions, whence they sent forth will, knowledge, influence, over wide districts of the land. . . . Wealthy capitalists, eminent bankers, members of the late Parliament, and country gentlemen, agreed over their wine that they ought to join the political union of the district, and went the next morning to enrol themselves. When face to face in their meetings with their neighbours of lower degree, they taught and learned much: new openings for action appeared; daily opportunities offered for spreading knowledge, proposing sound views, and discountenancing violence. . . . That the amount of violence was no greater than it was, remained, and still remains, a matter of astonishment to the anti-reform party, and was a blessing scarcely hoped for on the other side. After the three days in Paris, in the preceding July, thoughtful Englishmen asked each other with anxiety whether it was conceivable that their own countrymen would behave, in a similar crisis, with such chivalrous honour and such enlightened moderation as the French populace. The question was not now precisely answered, because the crisis was not similar—the British King and his ministers being on the side of the people, and the conflict being only with a portion of the aristocracy of birth and wealth; but there was enough of intelligence and moral nobleness in the march of the English movement to inspire Englishmen with a stronger mutual respect and a brighter political hope than they had ever entertained before."

Such was the school in which many of the half-million Englishmen about to be enfranchised received their first political lessons, and in which those who were already trained in the duties and responsibilities of citizenship began to find scope for their ardour. Such was the school in which John Bright, then on the verge of full manhood, learned and taught the lessons of the time with all the eagerness of an enthusiastic lover of reform.

We are to follow, in these pages, the course of English politics, and especially the policy of "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform," in especial connection with the personal career of Mr. Bright; but there is no need to trace the history of the first Reform Bill with much further detail. After three months of hard work in the House of Commons, during the second session of 1831, it passed by a majority of 109; but a week or two later it was thrown out of the House of Lords by a majority of forty-one. Then came renewed agitation in the country, rankling animosity, serious riots at Bristol, Nottingham, and other large towns, threats and even danger of revolution, the introduction of the third Reform Bill early in 1832, the wavering of a few peers, the obstinacy of the majority, which resulted in another defeat of Ministers, the monster meetings and petitions, the menace of a new batch of lords, the resignation of Lord Grey's Ministry, their recall, the personal appeal of the King to the reluctant peers, and the final enactment of the measure on the 7th of June.

It will not be without interest at this point to anticipate the opinions of Mr. Bright on the subject of Parliamentary Reform uttered by him nearly thirty-three years later, in the course of a speech at Birmingham in 1865. Referring then to the first Reform struggle, in connection with the struggle which had begun in the seventh decade of the century, he said:—

"It was not democracy in 1832 that was the peril. It was the desperate antagonism of the class that then had the power to the just claim and rights of the people. . . . Conservatism—they give it that name, but it is worthy of a very different name, be it Tory or be it Whig—is the true national peril which we have to face. They may dam the stream, they may keep back the waters, but the volume is ever increasing, and it descends with accelerated force; and the time will come when, in all probability, and to a certainty if wisdom does not take the place of folly, the waters will burst their banks, and these men, who fancy they are stemming this imaginary apparition of

democracy, will be swept away by the resolute will of a united and determined people.

“For one moment cast your eyes over the face of Europe. You will find that there are now only two considerable States that have not representative institutions—Turkey and Russia; and Russia is making progress in freedom—equal at least to the progress of any other State in Europe. Representation is found in Italy, in Austria even, in almost all the German States, in the Northern States, in Belgium, Holland, France, Portugal, and Spain. It is found also, as I have said, and as you know, all over the American continent. It is found also firmly settled as an institution in Australia. Englishmen, everywhere but at home, are received into the bosom of this great permanent undying institution, this safeguard for national, for human freedom. But here they are slandered, they are insulted, they are reviled, they are shut out. They are invited to half-a-hundred ways of amusing themselves; but if they stand at the hustings or at the poll, and see their richer brethren come up to vote, they are not allowed to register their names in favour of principles for which their fathers before them, and themselves, have sighed in many a bitter hour of disappointment.

“Now I would change all this. I speak out of no hostility to any class or any institution. That man who proposes to exclude permanently five millions of his countrymen from the right which the Constitution of his country makes sacred in his eyes, I say that is the man that separates Englishmen into two nations, and makes it impossible that we should be wholly or permanently a contented people. I demand then this, which is but the right of our Constitution, that the House of Commons shall be made freely and fairly to represent the Commons and the people of the United Kingdom. England has long been famous for the enjoyment of personal freedom by her people. They are free to think, they are free to speak, they are free to write; and England has been famed of late years, and is famed now the world over, for the freedom of her industry and the greatness and the freedom of her commerce. I want to know then why it is that her people should not be free to vote. Who is there that will meet me on this platform, or will stand upon any platform, and will dare to say that these millions for whom I am now pleading are too degraded, too vicious, and too destructive to be entrusted with the elective franchise? I at least will never thus slander my countrymen. I claim for them the right of admission, through their representatives, into the most ancient and the most venerable Parliament which at this hour exists among men; and when they are thus admitted, and not till then, it may be truly said that England, the august mother of free nations, herself is free.”

The speech was essentially that of a partisan; and perhaps Mr. Bright was no more ardently a partisan in 1832 than he was in 1865. But his partisanship had the distinguishing characteristics of strong conviction and honest outspokenness; and to these qualities we may attribute most of his oratorical force.





CHAPTER V.

THE ENGLISH QUAKERS.

THE religious denomination to which John Bright belongs, by family and education, and the tenets of which must have had a special influence in shaping his political creed, dates from the middle of the Puritan ascendancy in England. The Quakers of to-day are thus in some sense the direct heirs of the spirit and principles of the men who built up the Commonwealth, and asserted in the seventeenth century the right of free conscience, opinion, and action. It is true that they were persecuted by their fellow-sects, and that their claims were not admitted even by those who had had to fight a similar battle of their own, but it was an identical inspiration which moved the Independents and Presbyterians, the Quakers and every other nonconforming sect which (of its own free will or not) played a prominent part on the political stage. It was of course no mere accident which led to the close relationship between religion and politics in the age of the Stuarts. The relationship was a necessary one, having regard to the circumstances of the time and the character of the Puritan reformation; but the love of personal liberty displayed by these early English dissenters, which was their most

characteristic feature, belongs rather to the political than to the religious side.

The Quakers were so called in ridicule by the justice whom George Fox had warned to quake at the name of the Lord; but they styled themselves Seekers, and afterwards Friends—an appellation which they prefer to the present day. The earliest professors were imprisoned, put to death, shipped off to America, and generally treated with contumely and contempt; but they throve nevertheless, both in this country and in Holland and America. Amongst the emigrants to the latter country was William Penn, who took out a company towards the end of the seventeenth century, and laid the foundations of Philadelphia, and of the State of Pennsylvania.

One specially horrible story is told of the persecution to which the Friends were subjected in England. A hundred and twenty of them were sentenced, in the fourth year of Charles the Second's reign, to be transported to America, and about half that number were told off for the execution of the sentence; but there was a difficulty in finding a captain of a vessel willing to match so closely the conduct of a slave-dealer. The authorities seized or procured certain ships in order to carry out their purpose, and then a captain came forward who, for a given sum of money, undertook to transport the exiles. As the latter would not accept their unjust sentence, even by walking from the quay along the plank which led to the vessel, and as the sailors refused to ship their human cargo, soldiers were told off to put them on board. But they had scarcely reached open sea before they fell into the hands of a Dutch cruiser. Either when they were at sea, or as soon as they landed in Holland, they were smitten with the plague, and twenty-eight miserable survivors were eventually granted their liberty on the hospitable shore where their co-religionists had already found a settlement.

The account of the trial of Penn and Mead, in 1670, before the Lord Mayor and Recorder of London, is particularly interesting, because it brings into clear light the strong attachment of the early Quakers to the principles of individual freedom, and their firmness in resisting all encroachments upon it. They were accused of gathering "with force and arms" (which was not true) and "tumultuously assembling together" in Gracechurch Street, where Penn had preached to a congregation of about 300, after the doors of their meeting-house had been locked against them. Penn asked upon what law the indictment was framed, and the Recorder answered, upon the common law. The prisoner asked for a definition of the common law, whereupon the Recorder was very angry, and called him a saucy fellow. But Penn said, "It is my place to speak to matter of law; I am arraigned a prisoner; my liberty, which is next to life itself, is concerned." "The question is," said the Recorder, by-and-by, "whether you are guilty of this indictment." "The question," said Penn, "is not whether I am guilty of this indictment, but whether this indictment be legal. It is too general and imperfect an answer to say it is the common law, unless we know both where and what it is; for where there is no law there is no transgression; and that law which is not in being is so far from being common that it is no law at all."

Then, in the words of William Sewel, the historian of the Quakers,* "the Recorder snapped hereupon with 'You are an impertinent fellow! Will you teach the Court what law is? It is *lex non scripta*, that which many have studied thirty or forty years to know; and would you have me tell you in a moment?' 'Certainly,' replied W. Penn, 'if the common law be so hard to be understood, it is far from being very common; but if the lord Coke in his *Institutes* be of

* Vol. II., 196.

any consideration, he tells us that common law is common right ; and that common right is the great Charter privileges confirmed—9 Hen. III. 29, 25 Edw. I. 1, 2 Edw. III. 8 ;—*Coke's Institutes*, ii. p. 56.' The Recorder, taking no pleasure in that speech, said, 'Sir, you are a troublesome fellow, and it is not for the honour of the court to suffer you to go on.' Which, indeed, was very true.

" 'I have,' replied W. Penn, 'asked but one question, and you have not answered me, though the rights and privileges of every Englishman be concerned in it.' 'Well,' said the Recorder, 'if I should suffer you to ask questions till to-morrow morning, you would be never the wiser.' 'That is,' said W. Penn, 'according as the answers are.' 'But,' says the Recorder, 'we must not stand to hear you talk all night.' Whereupon W. Penn replied, 'I desire no affront to the court, but to be heard on my just plea ; and I must plainly tell you that if you deny me the oyer of that law, which you suggest I have broken, you do at once deny me an acknowledged right, and evidence to the whole world your resolution to sacrifice the privileges of Englishmen to your sinister and arbitrary designs.' This so enraged the Recorder that he called out to the officers, 'Take him away.' And to the Lord Mayor he said, 'My lord, if you take not some course with this pestilent fellow, to stop his mouth, we shall not be able to do anything to-night.' Then the Lord Mayor cried, 'Take him away ; take him away ; turn him into the bail-dock.' W. Penn, seeing how force and violence prevailed, said, 'These are but so many vain exclamations. Is this justice or true judgment ? Must I therefore be taken away because I plead for the fundamental laws of England ?' Then addressing himself to the jury, he said, 'However, this I leave upon your consciences, who are of the jury, and my sole judges, that if these ancient fundamental laws, which relate to liberty and property, and are not limited to particular persuasions in matters of religion, must not be indis-

pensably maintained and observed, who can say he hath right to the coat upon his back? Certainly our liberties are openly to be invaded, our wives ravished, our children enslaved, our families ruined, and our estates led away in triumph, by every sturdy beggar and malicious informer, as their trophies, by our pretended forfeits for conscience-sake. The Lord of heaven and earth will be judge between us in this matter.'"

The law and the conduct of the City magnates were execrable on this occasion—so much so that Lord Mayor Starling and Recorder Howel have never ceased to be held up as examples to the present day. But they were not specially exceptional in the Restoration period, and the protests and resistance of the Quakers bore witness against them in the interest of civil and religious liberty. That has been the watchword of the sect in every age, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and when the need for their protestation has been less urgent. They have at all times been conspicuous for their love of truth, of equal justice, of peace and liberty. Quakers were amongst the first, in England and America, to repudiate the institution of slavery, and to make uncompensated sacrifices by liberating the slaves under their control. And, as we shall see in the following pages, they have borne an honourable part in the recent political and social history of this country, being invariably found on the side of human progress and freedom.

The movement for the emancipation of the slaves in English dependencies, and for the abolition of the slave trade generally, is associated in a peculiar manner with the Society of Friends, many of the principal abolitionists being members of that persuasion. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, who sustained a leading rôle in Parliament throughout the controversy, was bound by close ties of relationship or affection to the Gurneys and Frys, to Mr. Sturge, to William

Allen, and other distinguished Quakers. He married Hannah Gurney, the sister of Mrs. Fry and Priscilla Gurney, and frequently attended the meeting-houses, though on his election to Parliament in 1818 he took the oath in the ordinary manner. He was never loth to be identified with members of the Society, and was certainly influenced by their modes of thought and action in a remarkable manner.* Outside the House of Commons the Quakers were active and indefatigable in agitating the question; and amongst them Mr. Bright found a new scope for his youthful energies. Emancipation was carried in 1833, when John Bright was in his twenty-third year.

It is a curious coincidence that the Quaker Joseph Pease, having been elected a member of Parliament, was admitted on making affirmation in this very session of 1833; and it was doubtless owing in some degree to the high respect in which his co-religionists were held that the disqualifications hitherto attaching to them were at length relaxed. As Sir T. E. May observes, an elected member could only claim his rights on taking an oath, and Quakers, with one or two other denominations, had conscientious objections to oaths in any form. "Numerous statutes had been passed to enable Quakers to make affirmations instead of oaths" (in courts of justice and the like); "and in 1833 the House of Commons, giving a wide interpretation to these statutes, permitted Mr. Pease, the first Quaker who had been elected for 140 years"—since John Archdale, returned for Chipping Wycombe at the end of the seventeenth century—"to take his seat on making an affirmation. In the same year, Acts were passed to enable Quakers, Moravians, and Separatists, in all cases, to substitute an affirmation for an oath. The same privilege was conceded, a few years later, to dissenters of more dubious denomination, who, having been Quakers

* See the *Memoirs of Sir T. P. Buxton*, by his son, Mr. C. Buxton.

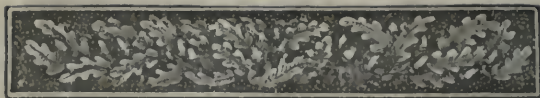
or Moravians, had severed their connection with those sects, but retained their scruples concerning the taking of an oath. Nor have these been barren concessions; for several members of these sects have since been admitted to Parliament; and one at least has taken a distinguished part in its debates." *

Mr. Bright has displayed a reasonable pride in his connection with the Society of Friends. Not only has he never ignored or compromised his religious opinions, but he has even appeared on some occasions to make a point of publicly referring to the fact of his belonging to a peculiar denomination of Christians—a denomination subject to disqualifications in the past, and not entirely liberated from them in the present. Nor have his critics failed from time to time to remind him of a circumstance which the least rational amongst them have regarded as a drawback, but which he himself has looked upon as an honour.

Certain of the minor observances of the Quakers rendered it difficult for a professor of their distinctive opinions to hold any public office, especially in more or less close relationship with the Court; and this was doubtless a disadvantage for Mr. Bright when he accepted office in the Government. The objection to wear Court-dress, or to remove the hat, and other formalities of a like kind, are apt to stand in the way of a strict conformer to these rules of external behaviour, which Mr. Bright was disposed to be. The rules, however, have latterly been relaxed, and the first Quaker Minister of State no longer encounters the same obstacles which had previously obstructed his career. The gain is no less to the nation than to the individual, when a man of such high talents is enabled to devote himself without scruple to the service of his country. Mr. Bright is, of course, not the only member of the Society of

Friends who has sat in Parliament with advantage and distinction during the past fifty years. Eleven Quakers were returned to the House of Commons at the General Election of 1880, whilst there have been Peases, or Gurneys, or Brights in Parliament ever since the admission of Mr. Henry Pease in 1833. That which has been said of the distinctive tenets of the denomination, and of the special political principles of the party to which Mr. Bright has attached himself, is applicable to all his co-religionists. Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform—but peace above and before everything—have been made their characteristic and consistent aims.





CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW ARENA (1832-1840).

THE eight or ten years following the enactment of the Reform Bill were years of struggle, of disappointment, and of reaction. The people had formed extravagant expectations of what was to happen when a more widely representative House of Commons had been elected, and when the reforming Ministers were at liberty to initiate a new programme. They were soon undeceived. The abolition crusade, with the emancipation of the negroes in English colonies, was indeed a great triumph; but it came almost alone. It was not without much misgiving that the Liberal party had seen one notable Tory and two members of the Canningite Administration introduced into the Cabinet of Lord Grey; and their fears were realised when it was found that Ministers were by no means at one on some of the most important subjects of the day.

Ireland was a source of great trouble to the Government; and indeed the differences which arose in connection with the schemes proposed for the redress of Irish grievances caused the break-up of the Grey Administration. The Premier and some of his colleagues had liberal and enlightened ideas on the subject of the Irish Church; and if

the issue had depended upon them alone they would have anticipated by forty years the remedy applied by Mr. Gladstone to the ecclesiastical inequalities of the sister kingdom. The Cabinet did indeed adopt a programme of reform for the Established Church of Ireland which satisfied the majority of the party, and would have gone far to conciliate the Irish Catholics; but their good intentions were nipped in the bud. The Protestant hierarchy assembled in London in May 1834, and sought an audience of the King to protest against a measure which they regarded as simple confiscation and spoliation; and William IV., more obstinately attached to the Church than to any other cause, launched out into a passionate declaration that he would never assent to such an act of sacrilege as was contemplated. This royal indiscretion was the more remarkable because a Bill for the partial reform of the Church had passed both Houses of Parliament in 1833, and a large majority in the country had unequivocally declared itself in favour of the relief of the Catholics.

The Irish question of 1831-4 deserves to be studied by all who would gain a clear idea of the politics of the nineteenth century, because it is in several respects a precedent for future stages of the same question, and because the men who were at that time just entering upon public life, or who, like Mr. Bright, were completing their political education, were now for the first time initiated into the extreme significance and gravity of Irish affairs.

The opposition of the King to the policy of his Ministers was fatal to their scheme, and delayed the settlement of the difficulty for many years. The crisis necessarily resulting from this opposition was rendered more severe by the resignation of Mr. Stanley, Sir James Graham, Lord Ripon, and the Duke of Richmond. The new appointments were weak, and greatly displeased the advanced Liberals, who had less confidence in the reconstructed Cabinet than in the original

one. Lord Grey would have given a department to the Radical Lord Durham, who was very popular in the country, but he was prevented in this by the Whig Lord Lansdowne, and by Lord Chancellor Brougham. A struggle was made to continue the Government, which still comprised such men as Grey, Althorp, Russell, Brougham, and Littleton; but it was in vain. Apart from the obstacles raised by the regular Conservative Opposition, by the Radicals, and by O'Connell and his friends, the Cabinet could not even agree on the policy to be recommended to Parliament. Lord Althorp resigned because he could not accept the Coercion Bill (intended to suppress the violence with which the Irish Catholics had been resisting the payment of tithes to the Church of the minority); and then Lord Grey knew that it was impossible to hold his ground any longer. He resigned office with Lord Althorp, and was succeeded in the Premiership by Lord Melbourne.

The rapid collapse of the Ministry which carried the Reform Act, and which undertook the management of affairs with an overwhelming support from the constituencies, must always be a matter for surprise to the reader of English history; but its causes are not difficult to discern. The Cabinet of Lord Grey was in fact—though it is not always described in these express terms—a coalition Cabinet. The Whigs and the advanced Liberals differed as much amongst themselves as the aristocratic supporters of the Premier differed from their traditional rivals. It was the differences of these two sections of the majority which overthrew the Ministry; and it was the weakness arising from their incompatibility which rendered it hopeless to try and resuscitate the Administration with a new leader and new component elements. Lord Melbourne, no doubt, would have done as much as it was possible to do towards this resuscitation if he had been permitted to attempt it without interruption; and there is no saying how he might

have succeeded, even on the morrow of Lord Grey's retirement. But another and an unexpected difficulty was created by an extraordinary exercise of the royal prerogative. Before Lord Melbourne had had time to display the stuff of which he was made, William IV. had intervened with a hasty dismissal of his Ministers, and a summons to the Duke of Wellington to form a Conservative Administration.

The Duke as a Minister was as great a failure as he had been a success when he served his country in the field. His Premiership in 1830 had been without glory, and he himself felt, as clearly as his friends and opponents, that the Premiership was out of his line. His attempt in 1834 was brief and hopeless, and the commission was passed on to Sir Robert Peel. Peel formed a Cabinet of Conservatives, pure and simple, and, obtaining the King's assent to a dissolution, appealed to the country in January 1835. It is significant that, although most of the new Ministers were thoroughgoing Tories, the Premier's manifesto was couched in extremely moderate terms, and abounded in promises of reform. The statesman who was to abolish the Corn Laws was already looked on with suspicion by the uncompromising opponents of change, whilst there were some amongst the moderate Liberals who would not have been unwilling to fight side by side with even a Conservative reformer. The young and ardent Radicals, like Mr. Bright, who, though they acknowledged their debt of gratitude to Lord Grey, had been dissatisfied with the subsequent timidity of the Whig Government, declined to contemplate the possibility of a compromise, and fought hard to keep Sir Robert Peel out of office.

There was not much necessity for strenuous fighting. The constituencies did not relish the sudden and capricious dismissal of Lord Melbourne by the King, and they resented it by returning a very large majority of Liberals. Sir

Robert vainly attempted to carry on the Government ; he was constantly outvoted in the House of Commons, and eventually resigned on the 8th of April, after being twice left in a minority on the question of appropriating the surplus funds of the Irish Church to purposes of general education. The appropriation was proposed by Lord John Russell and sanctioned by the House ; but when Lord Melbourne returned to office as Premier he was either unable or unwilling to carry out the principle, which was consequently abandoned, not to be taken up again until Mr. Gladstone adopted it a third of a century later.

The Melbourne Administration was barren enough in other respects—at any rate as compared with the wishes and aspirations of the country. The reform of the Irish Establishment was not the only reform which he might have carried if he had had more energy, more genuine desire to promote popular progress. He was a tactician rather than a statesman, and a cynic rather than a politician. Unfortunately his Parliamentary tactics aimed at little else than staving off the measures coveted by the advanced Liberals ; and his cynicism was directed against his Radical followers even more than against his professed opponents. The consequence was that the ardour for reform, which had set in so strongly five years before, was allowed to grow cool by the very men who had been selected to direct and utilise it. The Radicals were intensely disappointed, and Lord Melbourne fell into great odium with many of the working-classes. He held the reins of power until his death—with the exception of a brief interval in 1840 ; and the effect of his administration of public affairs was such that, on a dissolution of Parliament in 1841, Sir Robert Peel secured a large majority in the constituencies.

It was a strange education for a young and earnest Liberal, to have lived through the Administrations of Lords Grey and Melbourne, and to have arrived at full maturity

of mind between the enthusiasm of 1830 and the lassitude of 1840. No contrast could well have been greater: the difference in political spirit and energy between an ordinary reformer and an ordinary Tory is not more marked than the difference between the fervour of 1832 and the hollow cynicism favoured by Lord Melbourne, and adopted by the great majority of his followers. Liberalism had passed through successive phases in the interval, but each one was more barren and unsatisfactory than the last. The hopes inspired by the reform struggle had been grievously disappointed; and though many were found who accepted the comfortable assurance that all legislative changes were an evil if they could possibly be avoided, and that the ideal of good government was reached when there was little or nothing to disturb the public peace, there were still a few who strenuously rejected this doctrine of complacency. Reform was not a meaningless term for the whole body of Liberals, though it might be for a vast number. The fire kindled in 1830 burned with undiminished light in the breasts of an eager band of men, who had no notion of suspending their activity because their official leaders were not ready to move any faster, and who regarded the victory of 1832 as an incentive to fresh efforts.

The discussion of the Irish Establishment, and the devising of plans for the remedy of Irish grievances which were not acted upon even when approved, did not content the Radicals of Lord Melbourne's day. They sought new fields to conquer. In the House of Commons, and outside, they took up questions of social and economical development, they demanded further Parliamentary and Electoral Reform, they insisted upon moving, disturbing, amending whatever appeared to be amiss in the institutions of the country. They kept alive the old zeal for progress, which might otherwise have dwindled away to a vanishing point; and in every constituency of England, especially in the newly-enfranchised

boroughs, there was a nucleus of strength for any struggle which might need to be fought.

It is particularly to be noted that the Radicalism and the political energy of the fourth decade of the century were for the most part external to the House of Commons, a spontaneous growth and independent product of popular aspirations. Chartism was a movement of this kind, originated no doubt by highly responsible and respectable men, some of them actual members of the House, but still depending for its numerical force and persistency on the masses entirely excluded from Parliamentary representation, and almost entirely excluded from the scope of beneficial legislation. The middle classes supplied most of the leaders, and many of the peripatetic agitators, but it was on the excluded masses that the strength of the agitator was based.

In the light of subsequent experience we are justified in concluding that if Lord Grey's Reform Bill had been passed in 1820, or if the Act of 1832 had included household suffrage, Chartism would scarcely have sprung into existence, and would in any case have been a feeble and short-lived movement. The same thing may be said of most political agitations, in all ages. They would have been less troublesome to the ruling powers, or they would not have been at all, if the best of the excluded classes had been adequately represented in Parliament. It is not easy to calculate how many political disturbances the country would have escaped, and how much more rapidly the conciliation of classes might have proceeded, if the successive steps of electoral enfranchisement had been hastened. This, of course, is a mere truism for those who admit that representation in Parliament is the natural mode of relieving the grievances of the unrepresented classes. But the fact was not recognised, or at all events the admission was not frankly made, by the Ministries before that of Lord Grey, nor by the Ministries which came between his and Lord

Russell's. But the Chartists saw it very clearly; and so did all the social, political, and economical reformers, both before and after 1832.

The great lessons taught by the relapse of 1832-41, and even by the first half of the period, were that enfranchisement itself could only be a temporary and a partial relief—that after a measure of enfranchisement as large and apparently liberal as the Reform Act, another extension was forthwith required—and that in addition to extended franchise something else was necessary for such as desired to secure or hasten the accomplishment of particular reforms—to wit, the agitation of the popular mind, and the bringing of external pressure to bear on Parliament and the Government of the day.

These were amongst the main truths which would be impressed upon the minds of John Bright and his contemporary reformers on their entrance into public life. The Free Trade agitation was a field and a school for the exercise of their faculties, and for the practical application of the lessons which the circumstances of the time had taught them.





CHAPTER VII.

THE ANTI-CORN LAW MOVEMENT.

THE agitation against monopoly in corn, which led up to the greater and more lengthened agitation for free trade generally, assumed an organised shape and vigour about the year 1838, and was continued under the guidance of Cobden and the Manchester League until the year 1846. The movement was essentially external to the House of Commons, even after Cobden and Bright had obtained their seats in the House, and although Villiers and others had for a series of years been urging the House to take the matter into consideration. It is true that the Cabinet of Sir Robert Peel made progressive advances, from its first year of office, towards the final repeal of the Corn Laws; but the conversion came from without, and the victory had been won by direct appeals to the people.

Amongst the leaders of this movement Mr. Bright ranged himself at an early date, being in fact one of the first members of the Anti-Corn Law League. His acquaintance with Cobden is said to have begun in the year 1838, when the younger man, being interested in a Rochdale meeting on the subject of education, went to Manchester to invite Cobden to speak. The latter assented; and after he had

heard Mr. Bright address his Rochdale audience he returned the compliment which had been paid to himself. "Come with me," he said, "and we will never rest until we have abolished the Corn Law."

Thereafter the two men worked together for the cause which they had adopted, and their names are definitely associated with the agitation, as well as with the wider policies of free trade, retrenchment, and peace. The name of John Bright stood on the provisional committee of the Manchester League; he addressed some of the earliest meetings; he never wearied of the work until its end was achieved; he shared the labours, the odium, and the popularity of Cobden, whom in fact he excelled in oratorical power, if not in enthusiasm and assiduity.

When Cobden was elected a member of Parliament in 1841, his colleague undertook many of the duties which he had hitherto performed, and which he could not well continue in addition to his new responsibilities. Thus we find Mr. Bright acting as one of the members of a Conference on the Corn Laws, held in London towards the close of the session of 1842. He spoke at the meeting which inaugurated this Conference, and attended several deputations to Ministers for the purpose of drawing their notice to the grave condition of the country, especially in the manufacturing districts of the north.

Before they separated, the deputies drew up a circular, in order that they might repeat to every member of Parliament the facts and arguments which they had laid before the Prime Minister and other leading members of the Government. These are the terms in which they addressed the representative and hereditary legislators on the subject of the popular grievances. After recording a number of painful facts collected by the deputies of the League throughout the country, the circular concludes:—"We believe that if the Corn Laws be abolished, trade will revive, and the

abodes of millions of the wretched will be filled with gratitude and joy. The predictions as to the consequences of delay have already been more than fulfilled. You have passed a new Corn Law this session, and grain has advanced in price since its enactment, and it still rises. You have turned the burden somewhat, but you have not lightened it. We ask you to open the ports for the free admission of foreign grain, and to do this before you separate. Justice, policy, humanity, the very safety of our common country, imperatively require it. In your present course your motives are doubted; self-aggrandisement, rather than a regard for your country's welfare, is believed to be the object of your legislation. Your names are loaded with obloquy, and harsh terms are applied to you, on account of your unwillingness to liberate the industry of your country. We feel bound to warn you of the evils which impend, if you prefer the unwise policy you have hitherto adopted. We shall hail you as the deliverers of your country if you have the wisdom to see what is right, and the courage to act boldly and immediately on what is wise. Our sense of the critical position of our country has caused us thus to address you. The responsibility rests with you, and a heavy responsibility it is. That the Wisdom which cannot err may guide your councils is our fervent wish."

This outspoken document was signed by Mr. Bright and six other members of the Conference—two of the number being Nonconformist ministers, and all of them hailing from Lancashire and Yorkshire. Little impression, so far as appeared on the surface, was made by the deputations, the Conference, or the other action of the League in 1842. Ministers expressed their conviction that the Corn Laws were, on the whole, advantageous to the country; and the great majority of those to whom personal appeal had been made would not go beyond a general admission that the state of the industrial classes was lamentable. They denied

that the Corn Laws had anything to do with the popular distress, and maintained that they were either necessary for the regulation of prices or indispensable for the welfare of the agricultural interest.

But the League had no intention of leaving the question alone, or of remaining idle even for a moment. In August of the same year, Mr. Bright proposed to the Council that an address should be printed and circulated broadcast amongst the general public, reviewing the course of the agitation up to that date, and re-affirming their opinion of the Corn Laws. This address, which seems to have been drawn up by the proposer himself, declares (in the name of the League) "that whilst wholly disregarding the wicked and calumnious attacks made upon us by the abettors of monopoly, we feel it to be our duty to recall to the calm consideration of all classes the long prevailing evils against which we have unceasingly contended—evils which we solemnly believe have led to the existing commotions, and which, unless removed, will inevitably involve the nation in still greater calamities." As for the past, it was recorded that "in the autumn of 1838 the accumulating privations and alarming prospects of the people impelled a united effort to procure the abolition of the Corn Law. In the spring of 1839 a numerous body of delegates assembled in London, and appealed to the House of Commons to be heard at their bar; but their application was refused. In 1840 another delegation assembled in London to press upon Parliament and the Ministry the necessity of repealing the Corn Law, and this second appeal was also rejected. In 1841 another and more numerous body of deputies met, and reiterated their facts and arguments, and again the Legislature refused the act of justice demanded of them. During the Parliamentary recess between 1841 and 1842, meetings were held in almost every part of the country. . . In 1842, at the opening of the Parliamentary Session, seven hundred

delegates commenced their sittings in the metropolis. They sought an interview with the Prime Minister, who declined to receive them. They published an appalling statement of the sufferings of the population, and showed the intimate connection between those sufferings and the working of the Corn Law. The Legislature then sanctioned a change in the law which was entirely worthless, and tantamount to an utter denial of the just claims of the people. Subsequently, another delegation assembled in London, and had interviews with the Prime Minister, and with various of his colleagues. They laid before them the state of the country, the impending destruction of some, and the great depression of all trades; the intense and widespread sufferings of the people; the exasperation of feeling at the hopelessness of redress which prevailed amongst them, and the danger that some great social convulsion would result from the infatuated resolution of the majority of the Legislature, despite the prayers of millions of petitioners, to maintain their destructive monopoly."

The address proceeds to claim on behalf of the League that it had performed its part by bringing the facts of the case before the public, and throws on the Government the responsibility of refusing to recognise these facts. "Whilst," it concludes, "we strongly and unequivocally condemn every breach of the public peace, we desire to express our sympathy with the unmerited and long-continued sufferings of the working-classes, and our belief that the industrious population of this country, if justly governed, would invariably be disposed to conduct themselves as peaceable, honest men, and good citizens. Finally, we declare our unshaken conviction that the unjust and inhuman Corn Law is the main cause of the evils which afflict the industrial community, destroying the profits of the manufacturers, reducing the wages of the working-men, and bringing beggary and ruin upon a large portion of our countrymen; and we desire to record our deliberate opinion that the dense

and increasing population of this country cannot be in a prosperous, comfortable, or contented condition, so long as they are subjected to the pressure of the Corn Law; and that there can be no guarantee for the peace of society, or for the security of life and property, whilst large masses of the people are sinking into a state of abject destitution. We therefore earnestly implore our countrymen of every class to unite with us in urging upon the Government the necessity of immediately re-assembling the Legislature with a view to the total abolition of the destructive monopoly in the food of the people."

The condemnation of violence on the part of the people was not ill-timed. The Chartists were very active in 1842, and their leaders expressly held that a display of force by the masses was necessary in order to secure their ends. Men of sobriety and genuine patriotism saw the mischievous character of an agitation carried out on such a basis, and they strove, wherever they could exert their influence, to calm the popular mind. The members of the League in particular made a point of this. They had been freely accused, in and out of Parliament, of inciting their followers to disorderly acts; but the charge was entirely unfounded. Cobden, Bright, and the other principal directors of the movement declared themselves plainly and sharply against everything which might tend to produce a breach of the peace. It was especially natural that Mr. Bright, with his personal attachment to the methods of conciliation and non-resistance, should take this line; and accordingly we find him issuing an individual appeal to the working men of Rochdale. He has written so little in his time that it is worth while to read with attention this clear, eloquent, and moving address, printed in the autumn of the year 1842:—

"A deep sympathy with you in your present circumstances induces me to address you. Listen and reflect, even though you may not approve. You are suffering—you have long suffered. Your wages

have for many years declined, and your position has gradually and steadily become worse and worse. Your sufferings have naturally produced discontent, and you have turned eagerly to almost any scheme which gave hope of relief.

"Your fellow-workmen in Ashton and Oldham turned out for an advance of wages; they invaded your town, and compelled you to turn out. Some of you, doubtless, were willing, but many of you were reluctant, to join them. They urged you to treat the men of Bacup and Todmorden as they had treated you. They told you that you had no courage, and that you would be unworthy the good opinion of your fellow-workmen if you refused to act towards others as they had acted towards you. You became an invading force. You visited the peaceful villages of Bacup and Todmorden, and compelled your fellow-workmen to cease their labour. You were regardless of the sufferings you were bringing on their wives and children: you relentlessly, and contrary to every principle of justice and freedom, deprived them of bread! You have had many meetings to deliberate on your position and prospects. An advance of wages to the rate paid in 1840, and ten hours' work per day, were the demands you were urged to make. But when the turning-out in this district was completed, and you had become evicted, these demands were abandoned, and you were then urged to refuse to work until the Charter became law.

"Many of you know full well that neither an Act of Parliament nor the act of a multitude can keep up wages. You know that trade has long been bad, and that with a bad trade wages cannot rise. If you are resolved to compel an advance of wages, you cannot compel manufacturers to give you employment. Trade must yield a profit, or it will not long be carried on; and an advance of wages now would destroy all profit. You have a strong case now in the condition of the colliers and calico-printers. The wages of the colliers are not so low as those in many other trades; but they suffer, because they are only employed two or three days per week. The wages of calico-printers have only been reduced once during twenty or thirty years, and yet they are now earning as little as any class of workmen, having not more than two or three days' work per week. If they combined to double the rate of wages, they would gain nothing, unless they could secure increased regular employment. Your attempt to raise wages cannot succeed. Such attempts have always failed in the end, and yours must fail.

"To diminish the hours of labour at this time is equally impossible; it is, in effect, a rise of wages, and must also fail. You can have no rise of wages without a great demand for labour; and you cannot dictate what hours you will work until workmen are scarce.

“Your speakers and self-constituted leaders urge you to give up the question of wages, and stand upon the Charter. Against obtaining the Charter the laws of nature offer no impediment, as they do against a forcible advance of wages; but, to obtain the Charter now is just as impossible as to raise wages by force.

“The aristocracy are powerful and determined; and, unhappily, the middle-classes are not yet intelligent enough to see the safety of extending political power to the whole people. The working-classes can never gain it of themselves. Physical force you wisely repudiate. It is immoral, and you have no arms and little organisation. Moral force can only succeed through the electors, and these are not yet convinced. The principles of the Charter will one day be established; but years may pass over, months must pass over, before that day arrives. You cannot stand idle till it comes. Your only means of living are from the produce of your own labour. Unhappily, you have wives and children, and all of you have the cravings of hunger, and you must live; and, in order to live, you must work.

“Your speakers talk loudly. They tell you of your numbers and your power, and they promise marvellous results if you will but be firm. They deceive you—perhaps they are themselves deceived. Some of them contrive to live on this deception, and some are content with the glory of their leadership. They flatter you grossly, and they as grossly calumniate your employers. They pretend to be working out your political freedom; they know that that freedom can only be obtained through the electoral body and the middle-classes, and yet they incessantly abuse the parties whom it is your interest to conciliate and convince. For four years past they have held before your eyes an object at present unattainable, and they have urged you to pursue it; they have laboured incessantly to prevent your following any practical object. They have vilified the substance and extolled the shadow. They have striven continually to exasperate you against those who alone will, or can, aid you to overturn the usurpations of the aristocracy. They have succeeded in creating suspicion and dissension, and upon that dissension many of them have lived. They have done their utmost to perpetuate your seven or eight shillings per week, and by their labours in that cause they have enjoyed an income of three or four times that amount.

“My fellow-townsmen,—You have been in a fever during this week. Your conduct, unopposed as you have been, has been peaceable, and such as my intimate knowledge of you led me to expect from you. We are all liable to err; you have committed an error, but it is not a fatal one—it may be retrieved. I believe you to be intelligent men, or I

would not address you. As intelligent men, you know you cannot remain out ; you cannot permanently raise wages by force ; you cannot get the Charter now. What are you to do then ? Return to your employment. It is more noble to confess your error than to persist in it, and the giving up of an error brings you nearer the truth. When you resume your labour, do not give up the hope of political improvement—that would be even more to be deplored than your present movement. Cherish it still—a brighter day will come—and you and your children will yet enjoy it. Your first step to entire freedom must be commercial freedom—freedom of industry. We must put an end to the partial famine which is destroying trade, the demand for your labour, your wages, your comforts, and your independence. The aristocracy regard the Anti-Corn Law League as their greatest enemy. That which is the greatest enemy of the remorseless aristocracy of Britain must almost of necessity be your firmest friend. Every man who tells you to support the Corn Law is your enemy—every man who hastens, by a single hour, the abolition of the Corn Law, shortens by so much the duration of your sufferings. Whilst that inhuman law exists, your wages must decline. When it is abolished, and not till then, they will rise.

“If every employer and workman in the kingdom were to swear on their bended knees that wages should not fall, they would still assuredly fall if the Corn Law continues. No power on earth can maintain your wages at their present rate, if the Corn Law be not repealed. You may doubt this now ; but consider the past, I beseech you—what the past tells you the future will confirm. You may not thank me for thus addressing you ; but, nevertheless, I am your friend. Your own class does not include a man more sincerely anxious than I am to obtain for you both industrial and political freedom. You have found me on all occasions, if a feeble, yet an honest and zealous defender ; and I trust in this matter time will work no change in me. My heart sympathises deeply in your sufferings. I believe I know whence they mainly spring, and I would gladly relieve them. I would willingly become poor if that would make you comfortable and happy.

“I now conclude. I ask only the exercise of your reason. If it be possible, lay aside your prejudices, and you will decide wisely.

“To such of you who have been employed at the mills with which I am connected, I may add that as soon as you are disposed to resume your work the doors shall be open to you. I invite you to come, and you shall be treated as, I trust, you have ever been—as I would ever wish you to treat me.

“I am, with all sincerity, your friend, JOHN BRIGHT.”

Meeting followed meeting and speech followed speech, at this period of Mr. Bright's life, with but short intermission. 1843 was an especially busy year for him in this respect, for he had undertaken to visit many of the agricultural centres, in conjunction with Mr. Cobden, in the midland and southern counties where the League had not hitherto penetrated. The tour was made for the particular purpose of converting the farmers and farm-labourers—or, as some described it, of carrying the war into the enemy's camp. The corn monopolists, amongst whom of course were many large landed proprietors, took care to persuade the farmers that the Corn Laws were especially beneficial to them, enabling them to sell their grain at a higher price all the year round, and protecting them against competition which would soon be ruinous to them. It was very natural that this bait should have been very greedily swallowed; and indeed the immediate fruits of protection, artificially enhancing the market price of corn, were so patent and so acceptable to the farmers that they rarely had the strength of mind to follow out a line of argument which began by laying down the principle of unrestricted trade. Few of them cared to look beyond the present, or even to strike an average of a long series of years; whilst their dependent position was another powerful incentive to them to think in the same grooves of thought as their landlords. Thus it was that the advocates of repeal had met with very slight support in the agricultural districts; and even the eloquence of Messrs. Cobden and Bright had but a limited effect upon the farmers who listened to them.

It was not always that they could get an audience of farmers, for great efforts were occasionally made to prevent them from attending. Wherever the League discovered that such tactics had been resorted to, they had the speeches of their representatives printed, and circulated them afterwards by post—in some cases sending a copy to every voter

in the constituency, and invariably to every tenant-farmer. Nevertheless, the autumn meetings of 1843 were almost without exception favourable to the cause of free trade in corn; which was due partly to the fact that Liberals and other sympathisers crowded to hear the two men whose growing fame had preceded them, and partly also to the cogent and persuasive speeches of the orators.

Mr. Bright was in every way fitted for such a campaign as he was now engaged upon. He was full of vigour and spirit; he could be just as aggressive as the occasion demanded; he was dignified in rebuke and transparently clear in exposition. Few of his utterances at this time are preserved—except in the papers issued by the League; but it may be said that his repute as a speaker dates from the excellent addresses which he gave on the subject of the Corn Laws before he had obtained his seat in Parliament. His frankness captivated his hearers, whilst his bold and straightforward style lent additional weight to the forcible character of his arguments. In one speech, when he preceded Cobden in the discussion, he said:—"I am here to assert, first, that the Corn Law is injurious to the great body of the people of this country, and that it is founded upon principles which involve great injustice and loss to the community, and contravene the principles of Divine Providence. I am here also to assert that the Corn Law cannot permanently secure to the tenantry of England a high price for the produce of their farms; and, thirdly, that if it did do so, they would not get the benefit of that increase. If I prove these three points, I have a right to expect that you will have the candour and honesty to do justice to your countrymen and to yourselves, and never henceforth utter a syllable in favour of the Corn Law; but if myself and my friend Richard Cobden should fail in convincing you on these points, then you may go home resolved to maintain your present opinions on this law."

At another meeting—this time in the North of England—Mr. Bright lucidly explained the general results of protection on the national industries, ridiculing the idea that it was possible to “protect” one class except at the expense of other classes. He traced the effects produced upon the mass of the people by the scarcity which the Corn Law had inflicted upon them during the previous five years. He argued that the Corn Law was unjust, because it denied the right of exchange, and unnatural, because it operated to prevent abundance of human food. Legal enactments, he said, could not give permanently high prices to farmers, because high prices, the result of scarcity, impoverished the farmers’ customers, and were consequently followed by low prices. “He showed that if high prices could be secured by law, farmers would not get the benefit, as their numbers made them compete with each other, and give all the gain of the Corn Law to the landlords. He brought forward some valuable facts connected with the wool trade to prove that ‘protection’ had injured the growers of wool, and that in this article bad trade had always reduced its price, in spite of the operation of the protecting duty. He implored the farmers to unite in doing justice to the people as the surest mode of securing their own prosperity and independence. He described the sufferings of the industrial labourers of Great Britain, and appealed to the kind and honest hearts of the Northumberland farmers on behalf of the trampled-upon and suffering millions. He declared himself the friend of the tenantry, and in the name of the League held out the right hand of fellowship to them. His speech produced a very powerful effect, and many a countenance afforded an index of the response his appeal met with in that large assembly. A burst of cheering at the close attested the deep impression produced.” *

* From the Reports of the League, as cited by Mr. Ashworth, *Recollections of Richard Cobden*.

The mutual dependence and community of interests between the town and rural populations were more distinctly brought out in a speech at Salisbury, on the 8th of August, when Mr. Bright spoke as follows:—"Many things have been done by certain parties to induce you to suppose that the Anti-Corn Law League was a merciless and farmer-devouring association, anxious only to destroy the landowner, the tenant, and the labourer. We are of opinion that an association that asks for nothing more than justice, and which will be content with no less, is one which is as friendly to the farmers of England as to any other class of the inhabitants of this empire. Are we treating you now as if we despised, or feared, or hated you? There can be no greater enemy to the welfare of the farmer and of the people at large than the man who endeavours to create a feeling of class interest, and who sows dissensions and ill-feeling amongst the community. What are farmers? Are they not manufacturers of food? And what are those who are commonly known as manufacturers? Are they not the producers of clothing? And in this climate clothing is as necessary as food, and those who make the one are as necessary to the existence of the people as the other. Both are manufacturers; and whatever is destructive to the interests of the one must be equally injurious to the interests of the other. The customers of the manufacturers are also the customers, of the farmers, and there is not a single human being in these kingdoms, or out of them, who is not also a customer for the produce of the looms and spindles of Lancashire and Yorkshire, for the cutlery establishments of Sheffield, and for the various manufactures carried on in various parts of the kingdom. If the Corn Law has injured my customers (for I am a manufacturer), it has necessarily injured yours; and if those who have been accustomed to purchase cotton goods are now in great part impoverished and pauperised, they assuredly can-

not give you a good price for the produce of your farms. Let us have a total and immediate repeal not of the Corn Law alone, but of all commercial monopolies. Let the farmer and all other classes buy and sell everything at its natural price, and then injustice will be done to none, and thus the increasing strife of parties may be put an end to."

This speech concluded with a very eloquent and effective peroration. "If," said Mr. Bright, "the Corn Law has scourged us with thongs, it has lashed you with scorpions. It has made your trade fluctuating and hazardous, it has deprived you of political independence, it has surrounded you with discontented and impoverished labourers, it has raised your poor rates; and by making you compete with each other for farms, it has raised your rents; and all this has been done under cover of professing to protect you. We come among you to ask your assistance in the great struggle we are engaged in, a struggle which will be crowned with complete and early success, a success which will deliver you and our country from the most destructive and disgraceful imposition which any Government ever practised upon any people. In coming down from London to-day we have passed through many miles of waving corn; we have seen how the sun and the shower, the beautiful machinery of an all-wise and merciful Providence, have blessed the earth with fruitfulness; we have felt in many places how secure is the reliance on the unfailing goodness of Him who sends seed-time and harvest, and who has promised that they should never fail; we have faith in His bounty and superintending care; and we ask only that we may have what He offers us freely, that we may in security enjoy what He is pleased to grant us. We ask that our fellow-men may not impiously interpose between the good gifts of the Creator and the wants of His creatures; and we ask the farmers and inhabitants of this ancient city and of

this county to give us their cordial support in our endeavour to do justice to the much injured and oppressed population of our suffering country."

This is a fair specimen of the orator's more fervent and declamatory style, which he toned down somewhat at a later stage in his career, and after passing through the ordeal of the House of Commons, but which has nevertheless characterised many of his best efforts on the platform and in Parliament.

It was in the year of which we have been writing that Mr. Bright first entered the House of Commons. Here, side by side with his friend and leader on this question (though both maintained the appeal to the people as superior in value and importance to the appeal to Governments and parties) he continued to fight out the battle of Free Trade against Protection.





CHAPTER VIII.

MR. BRIGHT IN PARLIAMENT.

THE special aptitude which Mr. Bright had displayed for a political career, his statesmanlike ideas and opinions, and the oratorical power of which he could not fail to be conscious, naturally inclined him to think of a seat in Parliament. Fitness begets ambition; and there can be no doubt that Mr. Bright was ambitious from an early age to establish an influence for good over his fellow-countrymen. He was able without much risk to leave the direction of his business at Rochdale to others; he had done so earlier in life, in order that he might spend some time travelling abroad—he had again left the counting-house for the public platform, both on his own initiation and at the summons of Cobden—and he felt himself justified in doing so yet more freely when the opportunity occurred to present himself as a candidate at Durham for Parliamentary honours.

The admission of Mr. Pease on making affirmation of allegiance, instead of taking the oath, had removed the obstacle which had formerly prevented Quakers from sitting in the House of Commons. The disqualification still existed when Mr. Bright was enthusiastically advocating

the reform of the electoral system in 1830-2, and it must have stimulated his mind at that time with a sense of personal injury. But now there was no bar to his aspirations. The reformed Parliament had done away with the disability; and a more robust feeling amongst the members of the Society of Friends enabled a Quaker to take an active part in the politics of the day with less demur than would at one time have been made by his co-religionists.

Durham is a small Cathedral city, and as Mr. Bright was without local settlement or knowledge, it may seem not a little strange that he should have chosen such a field for his first attempt. Possibly the explanation is to be found in the fact that Quakers had already made themselves respected and influential in that part of the country. The Peases of Darlington may well have been one of the links between John Bright at Rochdale and the Liberal party in Durham.

It was at a by-election in April 1843 that the young Lancashire manufacturer and champion of the Anti-Corn Law movement appealed to the electors of Durham. His opponent was Lord Dungannon, a Tory and an advocate of Protection. The latter had most of the landlord influence, and was able to bring more of "the sinews of war" to bear on the election than the Free Traders could or cared to do. The consequence was that he obtained a majority of 101 votes—a crushing defeat for the Liberal if the contest had been fairly and openly conducted. But in due course a petition was presented, and Lord Dungannon was unseated. The feeling ran high on both sides, as may be judged from the manner in which the popular candidate was treated by the local Tory prints—not to mention the London papers, which at this time bore very hardly on the leaders of the agitation. A Newcastle journal wrote, in the interval between the two elections at Durham:—"It is stated that Bright, the Anti-Corn Law agitator, is expected to visit the

wool fair which will be held at Alnwick shortly, in order to scatter the seeds of disaffection in that quarter. Should he make his appearance, which is not improbable, it is to be hoped there may be found some stalwart yeoman ready to treat the disaffected vagabond as he deserves." The men of Alnwick, however, did not respond to this hint. Mr. Bright went to the fair and spoke with courage and effect; and his speech was received with warm applause.

It was in the same month that Mr. Cobden was molested and insulted in the London Corn Exchange. The defenders of the ramparts of Protection were bitterly inflamed against their assailants all over the country; and, as for Mr. Bright at Durham, it may be imagined that the unseating of Lord Dungannon had intensified the bitterness felt against him by the Tories in that city. He had spoken in many English counties since the April election, on his tour with Cobden through the agricultural districts, and no doubt his eloquent addresses had done something to increase his strength as a candidate. At any rate, the tables were turned at the second election, which took place on the 25th of July. On this occasion Mr. Bright defeated his new Tory opponent, Mr. Purvis, by 78 votes; and he forthwith took his seat in the House of Commons, thence proceeding without long delay to rejoin his friend in the provinces.

His return was justly looked upon as a great victory for the Free Trade movement. It increased the influence of Mr. Bright, and did much to cheer the agitators at the most critical period of their campaign.

The first session of Mr. Bright's Parliamentary career did not pass without giving him an opportunity of addressing the House on the subject which was uppermost in his mind, and in order to advocate which he had been elected at Durham. Mr. Ewart brought forward a motion on the 7th of August in favour of the reduction of duties pressing upon the raw materials used in manufactures, and on the food of

the people—which may be called the raw material of labour. The new member produced—not, apparently, to a very large audience—some of the strongest of the arguments which he was accustomed to employ out of doors; and he spoke with vigour and a certain sharpness which were not entirely welcome to the House. It has been said by contemporaries who heard most of his speeches during the first few years of his membership that he was considerably less effective when addressing his colleagues at Westminster than he was wont to be on public platforms, and that he only gradually secured the ear of the House of Commons. It is notoriously difficult for a member of Parliament to establish himself as a favoured speaker; and when we consider that Mr. Bright was not a mincer of words, or a dispenser of soft phrases, we cannot wonder that he should have found it a hard task to succeed where so many good men have failed. He was a little too thorough and earnest for his hearers, telling them that they had sown curses and dragons' teeth, and reminding them—or at any rate a section of the House—that there had been such things as the overthrowing of oligarchies. He criticised several of the Ministers personally. Lord Stanley (who had defended Protection at Durham) had displayed "the profoundest ignorance of the question;" Sir James Graham had been sound out of office and unsound in office; as for the Premier, he had better sever himself from a party with which he did not agree. He should like to see Sir Robert Peel bear in mind from whence he had sprung (that is, from the manufacturing class), and remember that what had made him had also made much of the wealth and power of England.

All this was somewhat rasping to its hearers, and they did not like it; but the time came when the nervous and straightforward style of Mr. Bright was listened to with attention and respect, and when his genuine eloquence was recognised even by men most opposed to him in principle.

He spoke several times in the House on kindred subjects during the next two or three years, with constantly increasing force and confidence. Though the lead was taken by Mr. Cobden in the assault upon the Corn Laws, his more brilliant colleague was always at hand to second his attempts, and was coupled with him in the mouths of friends and foes alike. Mr. Thorold Rogers, in the preface to his collection of the speeches of Mr. Bright on questions of public policy, well observes that the task undertaken by the two chiefs of the Anti-Corn Law agitation in Parliament was to all appearance most forlorn. They were opposed by nearly the whole Upper House, and by "a powerful and compact party" in the Lower. The Established Church, the London press, the "educated" classes, were against them; but they succeeded in the end. "Since the days of those men of renown who lived through the first half of the seventeenth century"—Mr. Rogers writes—"when the liveliest religious feeling was joined to the loftiest patriotism, and men laboured for their conscience and their country, England has witnessed no political career like that of Cobden and Bright. Cobden's death was a great loss to his country, for it occurred at a time when England could ill spare so conscientious a statesman. Nations, however, cannot be saved by the virtues, nor need they be lost by the vices, of their public men. But Cobden's death was an irreparable loss to his friends—most of all to the friend who had been, in an incessant struggle for public duty and truth, of one heart and of one purpose with him. Those who had been familiar with Cobden's mind knew how wide was his knowledge, how true was his judgment of political events. The vast majority of those who followed his public career had but a scanty acquaintance with the resources of his sagacity and foresight. He spoke to the people on a few subjects only. The wisdom of Free Trade; the necessity of Parliamentary Reform; the dangerous tendency of those

laws which favour the accumulation of land in few hands ; the urgent need for a system of national education ; the mischief of the mere military spirit ; the prudence of uniting communities by the multiplication of international interests ; the abandonment of the policy of diplomatic and military intermeddling ; the advocacy, in short, of the common good in place of spurious patriotism, of selfish, local, or class aims, formed the subject of Cobden's public utterances. But his intimate friends, and in particular his regular correspondents, were aware that his political criticism was as general as it was accurate. The loss then of his wise and lucid counsel was the greatest to the survivor of a personal and a political friendship which was continued uninterruptedly through so long and so active a career. At the commencement of Mr. Bright's public life, the shortsighted selfishness of a landlord's Parliament was afflicting the United Kingdom with a continuous dearth. Labour was starved, and capital was made unproductive by the Corn Laws. The country was tied to a system by which Great Britain and her Colonies deliberately chose the dearest market for their purchases. In the same spirit, the price of freights were wilfully heightened by the Navigation Laws. Important branches of home industry were crippled by prying, vexatious, and wasteful excises. And this system was conceived to be the highest wisdom ; or at any rate to be so invincible a necessity that it could not be avoided or altered without danger. The country, if it were to make its way, could make it only because other nations were servile imitators of our commercial policy, and, in the vain hope of retaliation, were hindering their own progress."

In a former volume of the present Series the progress of the agitation against the Corn Laws has been followed in detail, and there is no necessity to repeat here the part taken by Mr. Bright, both in and out of Parliament, in advancing the movement. He was assiduous from the day

when he responded to Cobden's invitation down to the day when Sir Robert Peel virtually followed his advice, and severed himself from a party with which he was not in complete sympathy. Long after this time, indeed, and never more than when the eighth decade of the century had drawn to its close, he was constant in his championship of Free Trade, which he has defended against every critic and enemy as few causes have been championed before.

One of the best and latest of his speeches, anterior to the passing of the Corn Law Repeal Act, was delivered in Covent Garden Theatre, in December 1845, at the moment when the Premier, unable to dissemble his conviction that the protective tariffs ought to be abolished, and declining to retain office any longer unless he could feel himself at liberty to deal with the question as he thought best, had sent in his resignation to the Queen. Within the past few weeks, as Mr. Bright assured his audience, he had visited on behalf of the League many towns in various counties of England, from Lancashire to Gloucestershire, and from Somerset to Middlesex; and the conclusion at which he had arrived was this—that the movement against the Corn Laws had become “a movement of the commercial and industrious classes against the lords and great proprietors of the soil.” It was a serious verdict to pass, and one which could not have tended to smooth the path which Sir Robert Peel was called upon to tread. But it was evidently the conscientious conclusion of a shrewd and honest mind; and, as for the Premier and his political prospects, Mr. Bright could scarcely anticipate what was about to happen. He would naturally suppose that the Peel Administration was at an end, and that a new Minister, probably a Liberal, before or after a General Election, would undertake to satisfy the demand which was by this time very loudly made from all parts of the country. “Have we not good grounds,” he asked, “for asserting that the Corn Law makes it impossible for any

party longer to govern England during its continuance? No statesman dare now take office upon the understanding that he is to maintain the system which the Protectionists have asserted to be a fundamental principle in the Constitution of the kingdom."

Throughout this speech Mr. Bright dwells on the fact with which he set forth—that the struggle was one of class against class. The Protectionists, he says in one passage, "think we are hard upon the aristocracy. They think that the vast population of Lancashire and Yorkshire are democratic and turbulent. But there are no elements there, except that of great numbers, which are to be compared in their dangerous character with the elements of disaffection and insubordination which exist round about the halls and castles of this proud and arrogant aristocracy." And in another:—"I am always fearful of entering upon the question of the condition of that portion of our working population amongst whom these squires and lords principally live; but I find that those newspapers which stand in a very ambiguous character before the public, which sometimes are and sometimes are not the organs of the Government, but are always organs which play a tune that jars upon the nerves of the people—I find those papers are now endeavouring to play the old game of raising hostile feelings in the manufacturing districts between the employers and the employed. Let them write; bread has risen too much within the last six months, and within the last two months trade has suffered too sad a reverse, for their writing to have any effect now."

After painting with terrible vividness the unhappy state of the agricultural labourers, the speaker goes on to say that the crowning offence of the system of legislation under which we live is, that a law has been passed under which "it is altogether unavoidable that the industrious and deserving men should be brought down to so helpless and

despairing a condition. By withdrawing the stimulus of competition, the law prevents the good cultivation of the land of our country, and therefore diminishes the supply of food which we might derive from it. It prevents, at the same time, the importation of foreign food from abroad, and it also prevents the growth of supplies abroad, so that when we are forced to go there for them they are not to be found. The law is, in fact, a law of the most ingeniously malignant character. . . . The most demoniacal ingenuity could not have invented a scheme more calculated to bring millions of the working classes of this country to a state of pauperism, suffering, discontent, and insubordination than the Corn Law which we are now opposing."

Nothing but intense and severe conviction could excuse such forcible language as this ; but the conviction was there, and the language stands excused by all reasonable men.

The remainder of this Covent Garden address is more scathing, not to say menacing, than that which has been quoted. Two passages may be extracted which will show to what a height of declamatory fervour the orator could attain when his feelings were deeply moved, and when his subject had taken entire possession of him :—

"A fat and sleek dean, a dignitary of the Church and a great philosopher, recommends for the consumption of the people—he did not read a paper about the supplies that were to be had in the great valley of the Mississippi, but he said that there were Swede turnips and mangel-wurzel ; and the Hereditary Earl Marshal of England, as if to out-herod Herod himself, recommends hot water and a pinch of curry-powder. I was rejoiced, not for the sake of the Duke of Norfolk, for I pitied him, but still I was in my heart rejoiced when I saw the speech he had made in Sussex. The people of England have not, even under thirty years of Corn Law influence, been sunk so low as to submit tamely to this insult and wrong. It is enough that a law should have been passed to make your toil valueless, to make your skill and labour unavailing to procure for you a fair supply of the common necessities of life—but when to this grievous iniquity they add the insult of telling you to go, like beasts that perish, to mangel-wurzel, or to something

which even the beasts themselves cannot eat, then I believe the people of England will rise, and with one voice proclaim the downfall of this odious system.

"This law is the parent of many of those grievous fluctuations in trade under which so much suffering is created in this commercial kingdom. There is a period coming—it may be as bad or worse than the last—when many a man, now feeling himself independent and comfortable in his circumstances, will find himself swept away by the torrent, and his goodly ship made a complete wreck. Capital avails almost nothing ; fluctuations in trade we have, such as no prudence can guard against. We are in despair one year, and in a state of great excitement in the next. At one time ruin stares us in the face, at another we fancy we are getting rich in a moment. Not only is trade sacrificed, but the moral character of the country is injured by the violent fluctuations created by this law. And now have we a scarcity coming or not? They say that to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and that a famine foretold never comes. And so this famine could not have come if the moment we saw it to be coming we had had power to relieve ourselves by supplies of food from abroad. The reason why a famine foretold never comes, is because when it is foreseen and foretold, men prepare for it, and thus it never comes. But here, though it has been both foreseen and foretold, there is a law passed by a paternal legislature, remaining on the statute-book, which says to twenty-seven millions of people, 'Scramble for what there is, and if the poorest and the weakest starve, foreign supplies shall not come in for fear some injury should be done to the mortgaged landowners.'

"Well, if this class of whom I have spoken have maintained this law for thirty years—if they continued it from 1838 to 1842—be assured that no feeling of mercy, no relenting, no sympathy for the sufferings of the people, will weigh one atom in the scale in making them give up the law now. They have no one to whom they can look for a promise to maintain it ; but we have some one to whom to look for a promise to repeal it. But the promises of Lord John Russell, or any other Minister, are entirely conditional. He knows that he alone cannot repeal the Corn Law. I had almost said that the overturning of the monarchy would be a trifle compared with the touching of the pockets of the squires."

Mr. Bright's peroration, full of fire and vigour, is one of the finest outbursts which have ever come from the lips of one who has been aptly described as the Tribune of the People:—

“Two centuries ago the people of this country were engaged in a fearful conflict with the Crown. A despotic and treacherous monarch assumed to himself the right to levy taxes without the consent of Parliament and the people. That assumption was resisted. This fair island became a battlefield, the kingdom was convulsed, and an ancient throne overturned. And, if our forefathers two hundred years ago resisted that attempt—if they refused to be the bondmen of a king, shall we be the born thralls of an aristocracy like ours? Shall we, who struck the lion down, shall we pay the wolf homage? or shall we not, by a manly and united expression of public opinion, at once, and for ever, put an end to this giant wrong? Our cause is at least as good as theirs. We stand on higher vantage-ground; we have large numbers at our back; we have more of wealth, intelligence, union, and knowledge of the political rights and the true interests of the country. . . I do hope that if this law be repealed within the next six months, and if it should then be necessary that this League should disperse—I do trust that the people of England will bear in mind how great a panic has been created among the monopolist rulers by this small weapon, which we have discovered hid in the Reform Act, and in the Constitution of the country. I would implore the middle and working classes to regard it as the portal of their deliverance, as the strong and irresistible weapon before which the domination of this hereditary peerage must at length be laid in the dust.”

There was, as it happened, no need for the renewed agitation and demonstration out of doors, which Mr. Bright conceived to be inevitable when he made this speech. Sir Robert Peel's resumption of office for the express purpose of carrying a Bill to abolish the corn monopoly avoided what must have been a most disastrous struggle at some personal sacrifice to the Premier himself, and with temporary ruin to the Conservative party. Cobden declared in the House of Commons that the country had taken the question out of the hands of party. It was true enough; but credit must be given to Peel for having placed himself, by his individual volition, above party levels; and this credit he has always received from his contemporaries as well as from succeeding generations.

The Free Traders accepted the Government measures, but

not without a struggle to make it immediate in its operation. Mr. Bright voted with his friends in a minority of seventy-eight for a motion to that effect moved by Mr. Villiers; but he recognised, doubtless with as much pleasure as that openly expressed by Mr. Cobden, that the Bill as it stood was a fair concession of the demands put forward by the League, and that the labours of the Manchester Council were practically at an end.





CHAPTER IX.

THE GAME LAWS.

WE have seen what Mr. Bright thought of the privileged classes in general, so far as their privileges conflicted with the rights and happiness of the people. His hatred of class inequalities, and of the injustice caused by them, was probably more bitter than any other feeling in his breast; and he has both expressed and justified this hatred at many subsequent periods of his career. It was not to be supposed that a man of so much shrewdness and energy entertaining these sentiments concerning the proprietors—or we ought perhaps to say the proprietorship—of the soil in England would be able to look with patience on the code of laws protecting the landlord's game, or on the system of game-preservation. And accordingly we find that one of the first demands of reform put forward by Mr. Bright, when he had entered on his Parliamentary career, was in connection with the Game Laws.

It had long been manifest to all reflecting men that these laws were amongst the most obnoxious and injurious results of class legislation. They had been passed at various times for the benefit of the landed gentry exclusively, and were

maintained entirely by and for these gentry, to the detriment of every other class, and of the nation as a whole. Blackstone had expressed the judgment of wise and prudent Englishmen—a judgment dictated by fact and sense and jurisprudence—when he described them as a “bastard slip” of the Forest Laws, a remnant of feudalism based on “unreasonable notions of property in wild creatures,” and “productive of tyranny to the commons.” There is no escape from an opinion such as this, pronounced by such an authority, rooted in irrefutable principles of English common law, and never gainsaid or weakened by any subsequent dictum. It is one of the most remarkable facts in the history of our country, that a body of statutes in direct opposition to the fundamental law of the land, enacted by a Parliament under the control of a few hundred families, for the sole benefit of the owners of land, and grievously oppressive to the bulk of the community, should have been permitted to remain in the statute-book with such slight and infrequent protests, and to continue in operation so long after their evil had been exposed and denounced.

Bad as the Game Laws were in their origin and character, their effects from day to day were ample to condemn them. Their cruel punishments for the slightest offences, and even for the bare suspicion of offence; the harsh manner in which they were commonly administered—game preservers being almost invariably the judges of accused persons—their wholesale creation of criminals, to the number of something like four thousand annually, and their demoralisation of the poorer classes by treating as a heinous crime what was in itself no crime at all, more than sufficed to prove the utterly indefensible nature of the code. It did not require a man of Mr. Bright’s strict sense of morality and justice to detect the viciousness of such laws as these. They had always been condemned, and always hated, even when no

healthy public opinion made itself heard on the subject, and when the voice of reproach was confined to the humblest ranks of society, and to an occasional utterance of indignation in the pages of some poet, novelist, or essayist.* It was only the wealthy classes, and those who flattered and depended upon them, who were blind to the gigantic wrong, or ignored it if they saw it.

The system of game-preservation which had been built up on the system of penal laws, or which had been hedged round and maintained by these laws, was one which had a close and necessary connection with the interests of agriculture and the supply of the nation's food. Landowners themselves were in the first rank of the sufferers. They paid

* Amongst other writers of the day Carlyle did his part in cultivating public opinion on the subject of the Game Laws and game preserving. He says in one of his Lectures:—"Alas! where now are the Hengists and Alarics of our still-glowing, still-expanding Europe, who, when their home is grown too narrow, will enlist, and, like fire pillars, guide onwards those superfluous masses of indomitable living valour; equipped, not now with the battle-axe and war chariot, but with the steam-engine and ploughshare? Where are they? Preserving their game!" And again, speaking of education in England, he says:—"This aristocracy, astonished in every feature, answers, 'Yes, surely the people are guided! Do we not pass what Acts of Parliament are needful—as many as thirty-nine for the shooting of partridges alone?'" Elsewhere:—"Neither had Watt, of the Steam Engine, a heroic origin—any kindred with the princes of this world. The princes of this world were shooting their partridges." In his *French Revolution*, he says:—"Our sharp-tempered Arthur [Young] has been 'pestered for some days past by shot, lead-drops, and slugs, rattling five or six times into my chaise and about my ears;' all the mob of the country gone out to kill game! It is even so. On the cliffs of Dover, over all the Marches of France, there appear, this autumn [1789], two signs on the earth: emigrant flights of French Seigneurs; emigrant winged flights of French game! Finished, one may say, or as good as finished, is the Preservation of Game on this earth; completed for endless Time! What part it had to play in the History of Civilisation is played: *plaudite: exeat!*"

dear for their sporting privileges, and were content to do so; but many a proprietor of large estates impoverished himself in order to secure the pleasures and patronage attached to the possession of a good head of game on his land. After him came his tenants, who suffered more severely because they had less capital, and who had but a small share of the sport which the landlord regarded as his compensation. The hares, rabbits, and pheasants preyed upon the crops, whilst the farmer was prevented by a clause in his lease from defending himself against their ravages, and from cultivating his fields in the most productive manner. The land was kept jealously bound up in enormous parks, woods, warrens, or holdings, so that it was all but impossible for the labourers to secure a decent homestead, or for the artisans to provide themselves with wholesome tenements. Vast tracts were kept out of cultivation; the growth of food was limited in a hundred ways; and thus the whole nation was injured for the amusement of a few wealthy men.

Townsmen and cotton-lord as he was, Mr. Bright always took a deep interest in questions affecting the land; and he resolved, in behalf of the agriculturists as well as of the labourers and the general public, to expose the evils of a system which had made so deep an impression on his mind. On the 27th of February, in the session of 1845, he moved for and obtained a Select Committee to inquire into the operation of the Game Laws. A month later, he was invited to a meeting of farmers at St. Alban's, who had met to do honour to one of their class for his courage in publicly exposing the grievances endured by the cultivators of the soil under game-preserving landlords. It was considered in that day (and often since) as an indication of high moral courage on the part of a farmer to utter a single word of reproach against a landowner. The landlords called themselves the farmers' friends, especially in Parliament;

and farmers as a rule freely allowed the claim, and held it to be their interest, if not their duty, to keep on the best terms with their patrons. Mr. Bright did not appreciate this subservient spirit. He told the Hertfordshire farmers that they ought to cultivate not so much the good opinion of landowners as that of other farmers; and though he had no wish that there should be that class spirit amongst them which would lead to the supposition that they held together for peculiar privileges or party interests of their own class, yet he thought that "a man is craven-hearted and mean-spirited who, when his own class is attacked, as the farmers have been through the operation of this system of game-preserving, would not come forward and speak on behalf of his own class and of that vast body of men with whom he is constantly associated, and whose interests are so bound up with his own. It is well," he continued, "that you should testify your high estimation of such men as your brother farmer whom you have met to-night to honour. Independent farmers, men who dare speak and dare come out, are not so abundant in this country as that you can afford to think lightly of any of them. Probably under no conceivable circumstances can it be expected that there should not be somewhat more dependence between the occupiers and the owners of land than there is between some other classes in society; but it is of the utmost consequence that a system like this—which wars against the prosperity of the farmers, which blights all their hopes, and makes it utterly impossible that their industry should procure its reward—it is, I say, of the utmost possible consequence that there should be men who dare speak out, and that when such individuals are found they should receive honour, and be repaid with the gratitude of their brother farmers in every part of the kingdom. We have heard a good deal within the last year or two of farmers' friends; but I take it that Mr. Horneastle is a true farmers' friend.

and, if it were not that fortunate circumstances have made him in some degree independent of those who would be likely to injure him, he would not only be the farmers' friend, but he would be likely to become a martyr for farmers."

On the injury to agriculture produced by the game-preserving system Mr. Bright spoke clearly enough. He had come to the St. Alban's meeting to protest against "a mischievous and unjust system," and he ventured to predict that the time would soon come when Englishmen would look back with astonishment at what farmers had suffered in connection with the question of game. "Look," he said, "at the position in which you now stand. The landowner lets his land, and the farmer, a capitalist to some amount, takes it. Well, everybody who is not acquainted with the circumstances of this country, and who is not puzzled with the extraordinary things he sees round him, would suppose that, when the landowner let his land, he gave up its ownership during the term for which it was let. That is, he lets the land to the tenant, the tenant having the right to possess fully all the produce of the land, and the whole of the animals and stock which live upon it. Now, look at the position of the farmer when he takes his farm. It is said he himself makes half his bargain; he is uncommonly fortunate if he does so. Is it not notorious that in every county of Great Britain there is, and has been for years past, a competition for land so fierce that nearly all the bargain is in the hands of the landlord? The effect of this competition is to bid up rent to the very highest point at which it can be hoped to be paid, and to bear down every covenant and right which, under other circumstances, the farmer might reasonably expect to be granted to him for the preservation of his interests. Now, the farmer gets possession of his land; it becomes the centre of the hopes of himself and his family; his capital is more or less in-

vested in it—some sunk in permanent improvements, and some in the stock, implements, and materials upon the surface of the farm. He hopes that it may turn out well for him; he gets up early, works hard and late—thousands of farmers with their hands, and thousands more with their heads. He gives his skill, industry, and perseverance to the soil; he is subject to the vicissitudes of seasons, against which no human foresight can altogether prevail, and he stands the chance and hazard of the markets. He has to contend also against the effect of the ignorance of land-owning legislators, in which ignorance, unfortunately for him, there are no vicissitudes. The result is but a very moderate compensation for his expenditure and labour, and that compensation is in many cases altogether destroyed, and in very many more cases much lessened, by a system which does no good to any human being whatever, which exists solely for the amusement of the rich and powerful class at the expense of the interests of the tenantry and peasantry, and at a very great and enormous sacrifice to the whole community. There can be no success to the farmer under a system of game-preserving.

“In moving for a Committee in the House of Commons, two or three weeks ago, I brought forward cases which were laughed at in that assembly, and which I was told were not true. I did not bring before them my worst cases, for I was afraid that had I done so they would not have believed them; but, now we have obtained that Committee, I will produce cases infinitely worse than the very worst of those I then cited. I shall call before them farmers, who will prove, on oath were it necessary—which it is not before a Committee of the House of Commons—that they had sacrificed at least £500 a-year for a succession of years. I can bring forward a tenant who can show that for a number of years he has expended £1000 annually in the purchase of artificial manure, and yet so completely was his farm

ravaged by game that he found it useless to toil and sacrifice his capital and to farm in this manner, and he therefore discontinued this large purchase of artificial manure, and thus to a very great extent diminished the employment of labourers, and consequently lessened their chance of a fair remuneration in the parish in which that farm was situate. By this system of game-preserving the landlords are made the greatest enemies of a class in whose real wellbeing they have the truest and greatest interest; for of all men in the world the landlord is the most interested in having his tenants contented and prosperous: not only because he lives among them, occasionally meets them, and hears from and about them, but because his interest is involved in it, if he could but see it in its true light; for where you find the tenants most prosperous, enlightened, and satisfied, there you find the soil best cultivated, the amount of its produce the greatest, poor-rates the lowest, and rent invariably the highest, and paid with the greatest certainty and security. But the landlords take extraordinary means to make their farmers suspect them. I maintain that there is not, and never has been since the time when man first peopled this earth, if history may be relied on, any race of beings so unsuspecting and confiding as the tenantry of this country."

Mr. Bright looked forward with a hopeful anticipation to the results of the Committee which he had secured, and which he regarded as "a tolerably fair one." He had selected seven members himself, and the Government had selected the other eight; and he expressed an opinion that "if the Government had dared" to do it, they would have put on the Committee from their side of the House men "more favourable to the interests of the tenantry" than the selected members. It is interesting to observe the spirit in which the young member for Durham entered into this inquiry, and to compare his expecta-

tions beforehand with the outcome of the Committee, and with the almost paralytic state of the movement against the Game Laws during the next forty years. He avowed a hope that when the evidence should be published, as he thought it would be about the end of the session, the "grievous abuse" would be fairly exposed; "and when that is once done," he said, "we may be certain that there is no man out of Bedlam, no individual who does not wish to bring down upon himself the ridicule or, what is worse, the execration of the public, will ever say another word in favour of this grievance of preserving game, which has been practised for so many years past by a great portion of the landed proprietors in most parts of the kingdom. But what I want is, that farmers everywhere should seriously consider their position. There are farmers who yet believe that I am their enemy, inasmuch as I have been prominently connected with the agitation of another question. It may be that those farmers are right, and that I am wrong. I believe they are honest; I am quite sure that I am. Upon that question we must agree to differ until one or the other be converted. I trust that all discussion upon it may be carried on in a rational and kindly spirit, such as becomes men who wish only for the truth, and then I believe the time cannot be far distant when that which is true will be discovered, and not only discovered, but established. But upon this question of game ninety-nine farmers out of every hundred would shake hands and agree with me entirely."

The speaker was too sanguine in respect of the Game Law Committee; though his dignified anticipations as to the future discovery of the truth of his professions, and the establishment of his honesty of purpose, have been in every sense fulfilled. No one now doubts that John Bright has throughout his life been a genuine "farmers' friend." No one, except his lightest and shallowest critics, has insinuated

that he has feigned an interest in agricultural concerns for a private purpose of his own, or that he has flattered and bribed the farmers for the profit of manufacturers, or to subserve his political ambition.

The Select Committee sat for more than a year. The Report was signed in June 1846, and the Blue-book contains more than 1500 pages, with more than twenty-five thousand questions and answers. Mr. Bright and his friends called thirty-five witnesses, of whom twenty-five were tenant-farmers; whilst about the same number were called by the professed advocates of the Game Law system—including eleven preservers of game, eight chief constables and police officers, five lawyers, three gamekeepers, four agricultural labourers, and one farmer. It was proved in the course of the inquiry that the average number of convictions under the Game Laws during each year was 4500.

The Report of the majority contains twenty-eight resolutions, whereof the first six approve in general terms of restrictive and penal legislation for the protection of game. Another commends the "more severe penalties" for day poaching accompanied by violence. One resolution recommends the abolition of certificates for coursing hares, and the reduction of the duties on greyhounds. Another advises "that the powers of constables should be better defined and enlarged, in regard to the search and detention of persons found under suspicious circumstances with game in their possession." This recommendation was afterwards adopted by Parliament, and embodied in the present code. Another declares that winged game plays no "appreciable" part in the destruction of crops.

Fifteen of these resolutions, on the other hand, admit certain grievances arising out of the Game Laws, and recommend Parliament to take steps for the amendment of the existing statutes. The recommendations were made in the following terms:—

“Resolved,—That in reviewing the statutes now in force with reference to the pursuit and sale of game, it appears to your Committee that alteration may be suggested without impairing their efficiency for the repression of crime, would prevent the unequal or excessive punishment of persons who violate their provisions. That it is expedient to abolish cumulative penalties for poaching. That it is the opinion of this Committee that the penalty imposed by the statute 52, Geo. III., c. 43, for sporting without a certificate, appears excessive. That it is the opinion of this Committee that the space of three days allowed by section 44 of 1 and 2 Will. IV., c. 32, for giving notice of appeal against any summary conviction under this Act should be extended. That it is the opinion of this Committee that it is expedient that so much of the 5 and 6 Will. IV., c. 20, which allows a moiety of the penalty levied under the 1 and 2 Will. IV., c. 59, to go to the informer, should be repealed. That it is the opinion of this Committee that no person convicted of night poaching, under section 1 of 9 Geo. IV., c. 69, whose offence is unattended by circumstances of aggravation, should be subjected to the punishment of transportation. That it is the opinion of this Committee that no person convicted of night poaching, under section 1 of 9 Geo. IV., c. 68, should be required to find sureties for not repeating such offence. That it is the opinion of this Committee that, apart from consideration of revenue, every owner or occupier of land having the right to kill the game on that land, should have such right without being required to take out a game certificate. That it is the opinion of this Committee that the present time fixed for the period at which feathered game becomes a marketable article, and saleable by the dealer, should be postponed; and they recommend that the sale of each species of game should be deferred until one day after the season for shooting it has commenced. That your Committee has received evidence to show that the preservation of large quantities of game has been the frequent cause of damage to the neighbouring crops. That it is the opinion of this Committee that in cases where the damage done to the growing crops of the occupier is caused by game belonging to or reserved by the owner of the land, such damage may be made the subject of pecuniary compensation. That it is the opinion of your Committee that although instances to the contrary have been produced to your Committee, evidence has been adduced before them which warrants the conclusion that, in general, a tenant's just claim for compensation is complied with by his landlord. That it is the opinion of this Committee that great difficulty must always exist in determining the amount of damage which has been inflicted by game on growing crops,

and that the estimate of such damage, however skilfully made, is rarely satisfactory to both parties. That it is the opinion of this Committee that where, from the vicinity of the preserves of adjoining proprietors, such damage must be attributed to the game bred and preserved therein, the reparation for such damage cannot generally be made the subject of previous agreement. That it is the opinion of this Committee that, under these circumstances, cases of hardship may recur; but the extreme difficulty of establishing the liability of any particular party for the damage done, or correctly assessing the amount of such damage, have (*sic*) induced your Committee to reject the suggestion that an action on the case would be a fitting or practical remedy for damage done to growing crops by game."

Mr. Bright, with a few of his colleagues on the Committee, declined to sign the report of the majority, and drew up another, which made more forcible deductions from the evidence brought forward, and offered more stringent recommendations to Parliament. The conclusion at which the minority arrived was that the Game Laws were hopelessly bad, that the system was desperately injurious to the community, and that nothing short of abolition would meet the justice of the case. There might be difference of opinion as to what should come after, but it was contended that only one course was open to the Legislature in respect of the Laws into whose operation the Committee had been appointed to inquire. They ought to be wiped out of the statute-book.

It was inevitable that Mr. Bright should come to this conclusion; and indeed he had been an abolitionist before the Committee began to sit. He was more than confirmed in his opinion by the evidence which had been obtained; but long before the inquiry was ended he perceived that there was something more to be taken into account than evidence, and logic, and even ordinary prejudice. The passions of the game-preserving landlords were deeply moved by what they regarded as an attack upon their most sacred rights and privileges. They raised the cry

that the title of every man to his lawful possessions was being called in question, and that the foundations of society were being weakened; and it was evident that the Game Laws could not be touched without an effort too great to be expected from a Conservative Government, and perhaps equally improbable from a Government of Whigs.

Nevertheless, Mr. Bright persevered so far as to bring in a Bill, based on the Report of the Committee; but he met with little effective support for a proposal which was considered as hopeless and even extravagant, and which was certainly most unpopular in the Houses of Parliament and in society.

If the failure of the demand for abolition in the fifth decade of the century was natural under the circumstances, there is more ground for surprise in the fact that no action whatever was taken in Parliament to carry out the recommendations of the Select Committee. Nothing could have been more precise and emphatic than these recommendations, so far as a moderate reform was concerned. The Committee had comprised a majority of members favourable, on the whole, to the system of game-preserving, and to the laws which reserved to landlords an exclusive right to the game on their estates; and yet their Report had strongly insisted upon the necessity of certain amendments in the code. The majority themselves can scarcely have supposed that their counsels in the matter referred to them would go for nothing. They had not been acting a conscious farce. They had not undertaken to inquire and decide on condition that nothing practical should come of their labours. No doubt Select Committees have sometimes been appointed for the purpose of shelving an inconvenient question, and Ministers, not over scrupulous, have agreed to inquiry for the express purpose of staving off reform. But it is not probable that Sir Robert Peel was actuated by such feelings when he allowed Mr. Bright to take his Committee.

There are, however, plenty of reasons to account for the abortive issue of this inquiry. The Report of the Committee was printed at the very crisis of the Parliamentary struggle for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Corn Importation Bill was being carried through both Houses, amidst the greatest excitement of all classes of politicians, at the time when the Game Law Report was finding its way into the hands of the public. The passing of that Bill exhausted the strength of the Peel Administration, and the Irish Coercion Bill, which immediately followed, was made use of to overthrow the Cabinet. Then came a change of Ministry, with other interests and pledges; and when the Whigs were firmly seated in office, their leaders were hardly better prepared to deal with the question than their rivals would have been. Governments unable to insist upon reform, and powerful individuals setting their face against anything like a change—these were the insuperable obstacles which prevented the overhauling of the Game Laws as the result of Mr. Bright's Committee.

But the evidence and Report published in 1846 were not without their effect, however tardy, on the solution of the difficulty. The Blue-book containing the minutes of the meetings has furnished testimony and precedents for Game Law reformers and repealers of a later age. Mr. P. A. Taylor, the member for Leicester, who has professed himself a disciple of Mr. Bright in this matter, and all who have continued the campaign with him, have drawn upon the arguments and illustrations of 1845-6; whilst the Select Committee of 1872-3 resumed the Parliamentary inquiry where the former Committee had left it a quarter of a century before.

Shortly after the publication of the Blue-book referred to, a volume on *The Influences of the Game Laws*, by Mr. R. G. Welford, which dwelt fully upon certain portions of the evidence taken before the Select Committee, was

issued from the press ; and to this volume was prefixed an Address "to the Tenant-farmers of Great Britain," signed by John Bright. The document is especially interesting, for it shows that the writer, undeterred by his late rebuff, had not ceased to agitate the question with aggressive vigour and unalterable resolution. He appealed to English and Scotch farmers, as capitalists and employers of labour, to assert their just rights and assume their proper position. They were at a disadvantage compared with almost every other industrial class, inasmuch as they were not permitted to enjoy the land which they undertook to cultivate and improve :—

"A farmer becomes the tenant of certain lands which are to be the basis of his future operations, and the foundation of that degree of prosperity to which he may attain. To secure success, it is needful that capital should be invested, and industry and skill exercised ; and in proportion as these are largely employed, in order to develop to the utmost extent the resources of the soil, will be the amount of prosperity that will be secured. The capital, and skill, and industry will depend upon the capacity of the farmer ; but the reward for their employment will depend in no small degree upon the free and unfettered possession of the land—of its capabilities, of all that it produces, and of all that is sustained upon its surface. There is a mixture of feudalism and of commercial principles in your mode of taking and occupying land, which is in almost all cases obstructive, and in not a few utterly subversive of improvement. You take a farm upon a yearly tenancy or on a lease, with an understanding or a specific agreement that the game shall be reserved to the owner : that is, you grant to the landlord the right to stock the farm—for which you are to pay him rent for permission to cultivate and for the full possession of its produce—with pheasants, partridges, hares, and rabbits, to any extent that may suit his caprice. There may be little game when you enter upon the farm, but in general you reserve to yourself no power to prevent its increase, and it may, and often does increase so as to destroy the possibility of profit in the cultivation of the farm. You plough and sow, and watch the growing crops with anxiety and hope ; you rise early, and eat the bread of carefulness ; rent-day comes twice a-year with its inexorable demand ; and yet you are doomed too frequently to see the fertility which Providence bestows, and your industry would secure, blighted

and destroyed by creatures which would be deemed vermin but for the sanction which the law and your customs give to their preservation, and which exist for no advantage to you, and for no good to the public, but solely to afford a few days' amusement in a year to the proprietors of the soil. The seed you sow is eaten by the pheasants; your young growing grain is bitten down by the hares and rabbits, and your ripening crops are trampled and injured by a live stock which yields you no return, and which you cannot kill and take to market. No other class of capitalists are subjected to these disadvantages—no other intelligent and independent class of your countrymen are burdened with such impositions.

“But the injury to your crops is not all the mischief. Inferior agriculture, which is greatly caused by the presence of game, involves not only diminished profits to the farmer, but a lessened demand for the service of your labourers; and this again brings about irregular employment for them, and insufficient wages; and from these causes come poverty, discontent, and that insecurity for farming property which has been so lamentably prevalent of late years in many parts of England. It is your wish, as it is manifestly your interest, that the labourers around you should have steady employment and good wages, for these are the elements upon which alone can be built up a moral and contented population. The practice of game-preserving is at continual war with every effort you make to improve the physical and moral condition of the peasantry. Insufficient demand for labour, low wages, temptations to poaching, and from that to more serious infractions of the laws—these are the natural and inevitable results of the system which is supported by legal enactment, and not less by the usages to which you are assenting parties, for the sole object of providing an amusement for the proprietors of the soil.

“Your own independence, too, is made the victim of this system. Your farms are not only not yours in possession, by reason of the live stock which your landlords keep upon them, but you are subjected to the incessant watching of an army of gamekeepers, who patrol your fields to see that neither yourselves nor your labourers interfere with the sports, or the subsistence, or the lives of the sacred animals which the law dignifies with the name of game. In many cases you cannot keep a dog or eat about your premises, and you cannot carry a gun across the fields for the occupation of which you pay a heavy rent, without exciting the suspicion of the ever-watchful gamekeeper whom your landlord employs to dog your very footsteps. That these things are irritating and humiliating to you is clear, from the interminable disputes which are engendered with the game nuisance; and the

experience of thousands of farmers attest the magnitude of the evils which are thus entailed upon you. . . . No man, and no body of men, out of your own ranks, can do so much for you on this question as you can do for yourselves. You are a numerous and powerful class ; there is among you much of wealth and of intelligence ; and upon you rests a heavy responsibility. Hitherto you have not sufficiently respected yourselves or your honourable calling and position ; the time is come when an effort must be made to teach the proprietors of the soil the limits of their rights, and thereby to secure your own."

This eloquent and stirring appeal to the farmers produced no great effect, at any rate of a manifest kind, or for several years to come. The address has ever since been amongst the most valued authorities of the Game Law repealers, and it has been cherished by the more liberal-minded of the class for which it was originally written. But on the ears of the great majority it fell (if at all) entirely in vain. Public opinion was not ripe for the movement which Mr. Bright had attempted to set on foot ; and it was only after a bitter struggle that one-half of his demands were conceded some three-and-thirty years later.





CHAPTER X.

RETRENCHMENT.

THE first two questions which occupied Mr. Bright's special attention after his entrance into the House of Commons had been those of the Corn Laws and the Game Laws—two branches of the statute law which he, in common with most other reformers, conceived to be bad in principle and in practice, and which he aimed to have expunged from the English code. We have seen how he failed in one direction at about the same moment when he succeeded in the other. He had the satisfaction, less than three years after his election for Durham, to assist in the passing of an Act which practically restored freedom to the importation of corn into England, and which was also the basis of free trade in many other commodities. In the matter of the Game Laws he had not had the same kind of satisfaction; but it must have frequently consoled him in after years that he had originated a movement in favour of a most important reform, and had been instrumental in collecting a large array of evidence which logically proved his case a dozen times over. In his attack on the Corn Laws he had himself been the prime mover, and had raised a standard under which many others were to assemble and fight.

It is a somewhat strange coincidence that the zeal and political industry of the young Rochdale manufacturer should have been expended, for several years together, on two questions of agricultural reform, only indirectly affecting the class from which he had sprung. But it was doubtless in prosecuting his first active campaign, whilst addressing rural audiences and journeying through rural districts, that his attention was drawn to the evils of the game-preserving system, and that his resolution was formed to expose them.

For years after 1846 the repealers of the Corn Laws and the advocates of Free Trade were obliged to defend themselves against the bitter denunciations of the Protectionists. These latter were by no means put to silence by their signal defeats in Parliament, nor by the constantly increasing signs of finality which endorsed the policy established by Sir Robert Peel. Landowners and farmers could neither forgive nor forget the part which had been taken by the Peelites on the one hand and by the League on the other. Peel had become intensely unpopular amongst the men whose monopoly had been cut short; whilst no quarter was given to Cobden, Bright, and their friends on Tory platforms. All these, however, could easily hold their own; and the time came when their enemies ceased to harass them.

The friendship between Mr. Bright and his old companion-in-arms endured as firmly after the victory had been won as when they struggled side by side in the heat of the battle. It often fell to one of the two to vindicate the other against aspersion and attack. A notable instance of the spirit and generosity with which both were wont to render this brotherly service occurred in the year 1850, when Cobden chastised a gallant Admiral for certain offensive expressions which he had employed against Mr. Bright—who had publicly ridiculed “the superstitious fears of a war with France,” at that time mischievously prevalent. “If,”

Cobden wrote to the Admiral in question, "unable to restrain the ebullitions of an irascible temper, you must needs challenge a member of the Legislature to mortal combat merely because another member is reported to have made a mistake in a single word in a speech of an hour's length, or because a reporter's pen may have slipped at a critical moment, then you have mistaken your vocation, and you would be consulting your own reputation, and the interest of the country, by retiring from the public service, and seeking security for your susceptible nerves within the inviolable precincts of your own domestic circle."

The writer's thrusts were often keener in his later years than they were wont to be in his youth, and it seems not improbable that his constant association with the more vigorous and forcible orator had served to put an edge on his usually mild language. There was, it would seem, a certain divergence of opinion on the part of these two earnest reformers after they had concluded their work of demolishing the corn monopoly. The divergence, it need scarcely be added, was extremely slight, and could not have been discernible to the general public. It was on a point of theory, or rather on a detail of procedure, which, however, did not largely affect the course of the two friends in the political arena. After the adoption of a Free Trade policy, as Mr. Thorold Rogers observes,* Cobden proposed to bend all his efforts towards the reduction of the public expenditure. "I can recall this," says Mr. Rogers, "from my own conversation with him after that epoch, and my memory has been refreshed by similar recollections narrated to me by my friend Mr. Bright. Till he was undeceived by the popularity of Lord Palmerston's measures . . . Mr. Cobden believed in the possibility of influencing those who had been emancipated by the Reform Bill of 1832 in the

* *Cobden and Political Opinion*, ch. 6.

direction of financial economy. Mr. Bright, on the other hand, entertained the opinion, and events will prove that he is right, that financial economy was an improbable policy until the franchise is carried into a far lower stratum of income and expenditure. Cobden arrived at his conclusion from an interpretation of economical forces; Bright withheld his assent to the cogency of those economical forces from a rational interpretation which he made of human nature."

Cobden's earlier notions on the subject of financial reform were manifestly based on the same general principle as his conduct in respect of the Corn Laws. He strove for the greatest possible amount of freedom, and the utmost liberty and absence of constraint which might be compatible with the public interests. The principle is irrefutable, and the only question is as to the deductions which may safely be drawn from it. Cobden became a member of the Financial Reform Association, founded in Liverpool in 1848, "to advocate economical government, just taxation, and perfect freedom of trade." The Association has explained this to mean that the Excise and Customs duties should be entirely swept away, and that the whole expenditure of Government should be provided by direct taxation. In this it is evident that the deduction is carried further than many economical reformers could follow it. It is a vexed question whether it be not altogether advantageous to tax articles of luxury absolutely superfluous to the general population of the country, and perhaps more or less noxious to the consumers themselves, and through them to the community. And again, it is by no means clear how we should proceed to raise from fifty to eighty millions sterling by direct taxation, so as to be just to all classes, and to avoid the intolerable oppression of individuals. Cobden did not elaborate any scheme for reforming the system of taxation in detail; he was content to rest upon the general principle which he instinctively felt to be just. As for practical politics, he

simply demanded the repeal of a tax on commodities whenever he saw a chance, and insisted on the need of economy in and out of season.

Of course Mr. Bright was heartily with his friend as far as concerned the principle of reduction of expenditure and the repeal of taxation on commodities. But he had taken a closer view of the condition of the working classes, both in the towns and in the rural districts, and he doubtless saw that the questions of economy and financial reform were intimately connected with the great mass of the people, who felt the worst pinch of poverty, and who were certain, when they had obtained political power, to make the demand for retrenchment irresistible. Retrenchment, he knew, could not be expected under the existing condition of affairs, when the voting classes were apt to rush into wars and other enterprises whereof the cost was enormous, and when no Government was at all likely to receive the sanction of a majority for a policy of drastic economy. And again, assuming retrenchment to be carried out on a large scale, it was clear that the multitudes of non-voters, who were in a large measure non-payers of taxation, would profit less than the more prosperous classes of professional men and tradesmen, who were large consumers of taxed commodities. Mr. Bright might have been excused if he had not thought it worth while to contend for a boon which would have been so unequally enjoyed; but he was undoubtedly wise in deciding that the extension of the franchise ought to come before any systematic campaign was waged on behalf of retrenchment — to the exclusion, meanwhile, of other struggles and reforms.

What Mr. Bright did do for the cause of economy, in the fifth and sixth decades especially, was to preach in season and out of season against the folly of war, the madness of suffering the national expenditure to rise indefinitely year after year, and the necessity of finding some better system

for the incidence of taxation upon taxpayers. If he had not seen the use of agitating these questions in the same way as that in which he had agitated the question of Free Trade, he fully recognised the necessity of discussing them in Parliament, and urging what he deemed to be prudent and necessary courses upon his colleagues in the House. His views on financial policy in general may be gleaned from a speech in the House of Commons, in July 1859, in a debate in which he had been preceded by Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli; and there were circumstances which made this utterance of Mr. Bright's peculiarly important and effectual. Mr. Thorold Rogers describes these circumstances in the following terms:—"Mr. Disraeli took occasion to give an elaborate defence of the financial policy of the late Government, and to criticise the position which the income-tax assumed in the scheme of the existing Administration. He recommended that the additional income-tax, instead of being collected in six months, should be extended over a year. But he assumed that the public expenditure of the country could not be diminished. It was to this point especially that Mr. Bright directed himself. When the report of this speech arrived in Paris, it attracted the attention of M. Chevalier, the distinguished French economist. He wrote at once to Mr. Cobden, expressing his belief that a Commercial Treaty between England and France might be negotiated, and urged him to come to Paris during the autumn to make the attempt. Mr. Cobden went to Paris during the autumn, having received the sanction of the leading members of the Government, and sought an interview with the Emperor of the French. Negotiations were at once entered into, and the treaty of commerce with France was the result. This was the crowning labour of the public life of Mr. Cobden, and with it his name and fame will be for ever associated."

Mr. Bright's position was simply this—that the same

device would prevent the waste of many millions in war, and would bring many millions into the pockets of the people. Mr. Disraeli had passed from the financial policy of the Government to their foreign policy, and Mr. Bright followed him in this course. It was not long after he had incurred the utmost odium by daring to deprecate and condemn the Crimean War, and the militant spirit of Lord Palmerston in regard to France; and he seized the opportunity in this speech to dwell on the intimate relation between such a policy towards foreign nations and the ever-increasing expenditure of the country. He referred with some ridicule to the baseless talk on both sides of the Channel, according to which it appeared that the two nations were on the eve of a quarrel, and were mutually preparing for invasion. He could not believe that Frenchmen were "so very different from ourselves as some people wish to teach us;" but, on the contrary, he felt assured that the thirty-six millions of the inhabitants of France, "engaged in all the honest occupations of their country, as our people are engaged here," were as anxious for peace with England as any Englishman could be for a perpetual peace with France. If he were in the responsible position occupied by the Premier and Foreign Secretary, he would try to emancipate himself from "those old, ragged, worthless, and bloody traditions which are found in every pigeon-hole and almost on every document in the Foreign Office." He would approach the French Government in "a sensible, a moral, and a Christian spirit."

"I would make this offer to the French Government, and I would make it with a frankness that could not be misunderstood. If it were accepted on the other side, it would be received with enthusiasm in England, and would be marked as the commencement of a new era in Europe. I would say to the French Government, 'We are but twenty miles apart, the trade between us is nothing like what it ought to be, considering the population of the two countries, their vast increase of productive power, and their great wealth. We have certain things on this side which now bar the intercourse between the two nations. We

have some remaining duties which are of no consequence either to the Revenue or to Protection, which everybody has given up here, but they still interrupt the trade between you and us. We will reconsider these and remove them. We have also an extraordinary heavy duty upon one of the greatest products of the soil of France—upon the light wines of your country.’ The Chancellor of the Exchequer, and perhaps the right hon. gentleman opposite, may start at once, and say, that involves a revenue of £1,500,000, or at least of £1,200,000. The right hon. gentleman talked of the National Debt being a flea-bite. What is £1,200,000—what is £1,500,000, if it be so much as that—what is £2,000,000 for the abolition of the wine duties or their reduction to a very low scale, if by such an offer as this we should enable the Emperor of the French to do that which he is most anxious to do? The only persons whom the French Emperor cannot cope with are the monopolists of his own country. If he could offer to his nation 30,000,000 of the English people as customers, would not that give him an irresistible power to make changes in the French tariff which would be as advantageous to us as they would be to his own country? I do believe that if that were honestly done, done without any diplomatic finesse, and without obstacles being attached to it that would make its acceptance impossible, it would bring about a state of things which history would pronounce to be glorious.

“The tone taken to-night by the right hon. gentleman the member for Buckinghamshire, and the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will find a response in the country. I am not accustomed to compliment the noble lord at the head of the Government. I have always condemned the policy which I thought wrong, but which, I have no doubt, the noble lord thought was best calculated to promote the interests of the country. I believe he was mistaken, and that he was importing into this century the politics of the last; but I do not think it would be possible to select a Minister who could better carry out a policy which would be just to France, and beneficial to ourselves, than the noble lord. Blood shines more, and attracts the vision of man more than beneficent measures. But the glory of such measures is far more lasting, and that glory the noble lord can achieve. I live among the people. I know their toils and their sorrows, and I see their pauperism—for little better than pauperism is the lot of vast numbers of our countrymen from their cradles to their graves. It is for them I speak; for them I give my time in this assembly; and in heartfelt sorrow for their sufferings I pray that some statesman may take the steps which I have indicated. He who can establish such a state of things between France and England will do much to promote

the future prosperity of two great nations, and will show that eighteen hundred years of Christian professions are at length to be followed by something like Christian practice."

Here, no doubt, we have the basis of Mr. Bright's practical views on the subject of retrenchment; and in the same speech we find him illustrating his contentions from the estimates then before the House. He objected very strongly to the permanent re-imposition of the Income-Tax, at any rate until the existing taxes had been put on a satisfactory footing, "so that every man and every description of property may be called upon by the State in its just proportions to support the burdens and the necessities of the State." But still more vigorously did he protest against the increase of expenditure which was due to wars and panics, to unnecessary defences, and to a braggart display of force. He spoke of "our growing and frightful expenditure." Mr. Gladstone has pointed out that, up to 1833, in the great departments of expenditure, there had been no great increase for many years. "Although," says Mr. Bright, "I have been protesting session after session against this growing expenditure, I was not fully aware of the enormous increase which has taken place until I compared the present year with 1853 and some preceding years. I find that in 1853, on the estimate of the right hon. gentleman, the expenditure was only £50,782,000, while the expenditure in the current year is £69,207,000. The House must bear in mind that this is somewhat of an unfair picture, because since 1853 there has been a sum of money charged to the expenditure which formerly went in the collection of the revenue. Making every allowance, however, for the £4,740,000, which is disposed of in this way, the expenditure has positively increased in the interval by £13,685,000. . . . There can be no doubt that the great and serious item in our outgoings is that of armaments, for I find that the military and naval expenditure of the country has risen

from £17,000,000 in 1853 to upwards of £26,000,000 in 1860."

Facts like these fully warranted Mr. Bright and his friends in raising their protests against the system, or the traditions and spirit of government, under which it had become necessary to impose such heavy and increasing burdens upon the people.





CHAPTER XI.

"THE PEACE PARTY."

WE have seen in the last chapter how very easily and naturally an advocate of economy could glide into a discussion of foreign affairs, and of the conduct of Ministers in respect of them. The policy of retrenchment depends upon and leads up to the policy of avoiding war as the greatest of all economical evils, and of clinging to peace as the best possible mode of reducing our national expenditure.

We may pass on now to consider the circumstances under which Mr. Bright and his friends became notorious as "the Peace Party," and the various elements and aspects of the case which they have consistently laboured to establish at the bar of English public opinion. It is a case which is second in importance to none other, in the whole range of political thought and theory; and there is no doubt that it commends itself more and more every year to the judgment of the nation at large. And it is, at the same time, one which bristles with difficulties and perplexities of no ordinary kind—such as the definition of just and unjust wars, the balance of advantages and disadvantages in each particular war, the degree to which arbitration is possible or

impossible as an alternative to war, the mode in which disarmament may be most safely accomplished, the relations in which England stands, or ought to stand, towards her colonies and dependencies, and the like.

The so-called "Peace Party" first assumed a distinct and impressive attitude in England on the occasion of the war with Russia in 1854-6, when Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and others who acted with them, were specially conspicuous in their protests against a war which was embraced with somewhat absurd enthusiasm by the great majority of the nation. It demanded the highest moral courage to oppose the policy of Ministers and to stem the tide of feeling which at that crisis set so strongly towards war; but the Free Traders had already displayed their moral courage, and were not likely to shrink even before the unpopularity which was certain to be their lot in this instance.

Mr. Bright—who had been elected member for Manchester some years before—wrote a letter in April 1854, when hostilities had not yet actually broken out between England and Russia, replying to an invitation to a meeting in that town; and in the course of it he said: "I believe the war to be altogether unnecessary, and that nothing can be said either for its justice or its expediency. I believe, further, that after having permitted the country, by a series of blunders, to drift into war, the Ministers who have chiefly spoken on the subject, with the exception of Lord Aberdeen, have misrepresented the facts of the case, and have therefore misled public opinion." As for the result of the war, Mr. Bright predicted that it would be useless. Russia, he said, "in her wildest dreams of ambition, never imagined so many calamities to Turkey as have been brought upon that devoted country in a single year by the friendship which our Government has professed towards her."

Of course such words as these were unpalatable in the highest degree to Mr. Bright's countrymen. He was accused

of want of patriotism, almost of treason, and was treated on some occasions with contempt. A notable instance was afforded by Lord Palmerston, who used outrageous language to the member for Manchester in the House of Commons, after the latter had protested against certain inflated language employed by Ministers at a banquet to Sir Charles Napier. "Sir," said the Foreign Secretary, "the honourable and reverend gentleman—" Here Mr. Cobden appealed to the Speaker to know if this "flippant" language was in order. Lord Palmerston continued:—"I will not quarrel about words (a laugh), but as the hon. gentleman has been pleased to advert to the circumstance of my being chairman at a dinner to which allusion has been made, and as he has been kind enough to express an opinion as to my conduct on that occasion, I deem it right to inform the hon. gentleman that any opinion he may entertain either of me personally or of my conduct, private or political, is to me a matter of the most perfect indifference. (Cheers and laughter.) I am further convinced that the opinion of this country with regard to me and my conduct will in no way whatever be influenced by anything that the hon. gentleman may say. I therefore treat the censure of the hon. gentleman with the most perfect indifference and contempt. (Some cries of 'Order!') Is that parliamentary or not? (Laughter.) If it is not, I do not insist upon the expression. (Cheers and laughter)." *

Posterity does not excuse this vulgar tirade, unless it be on account of the excitement of the time through which the country was then passing. Lord Palmerston, however, did not conceal his dislike of Mr. Bright, and took many opportunities of making it manifest. The great popularity of Lord Palmerston may be in some degree the measure of the other's disfavour, which endured for several years, and

* March 13, 1854 (See Irving, *Annals of Our Time*).

was illustrated by his rejection by Manchester at the next general election.

In another letter, six months after the one already quoted, Mr. Bright declared that he had been from the first in favour of non-intervention. The danger of the Russian power, he said, was a mere phantom; the alleged necessity of upholding the Ottoman tyranny in Europe an absurdity. "Our love for civilisation, when we subject the Greeks and Christians to the Turks, is a sham; and our sacrifices for freedom, when working out the behests of the Emperor of the French, and coaxing Austria to help us, are pitiful impostures. The evils of non-intervention are remote and vague, and could neither be weighed nor described in any accurate terms."

This was clearly calculated to give offence, written in the crisis of the war, after Alma and Balaklava, but before Sebastopol was taken. No doubt Mr. Bright was conscious that he would give great offence by what he wrote, but still deemed it necessary that the war should be protested against at a moment when the protest would be most impressive. A majority of Englishmen have come round to his opinion—that the war was unnecessary, and even unjust, that non-intervention would have been the right policy, that it was a folly to take as the basis of our action, and to make such vast sacrifices for, the maintenance of the Ottoman power. It is questionable whether England will ever again fight a war on such inadequate grounds. The "peace policy" has rapidly made way amongst us; and no one will grudge Mr. Bright the credit of having been largely instrumental in this advance. His plain speaking may have occasionally detracted from the mere temporary persuasiveness of his remarks; but the lapse of years has established their value and general truth.

The conclusion of the letter above mentioned (which was in reply to an invitation to attend a meeting of the Man-

chester branch of the Patriotic Fund) was vigorous in the extreme. "I cannot go with you," wrote Mr. Bright. "I will have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood which is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may influence an Administration; delusion may mislead a people; Vattel may afford you a law and a defence; but no respect for men who form a Government, no regard I have for going with the stream, and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism, shall influence me in favour of a policy which, in my conscience, I believe to be as criminal before God as it is destructive of the true interests of my country."

Cobden was scarcely less pronounced and courageous than his friend in protesting against the Crimean War, and he also lost the favour of his constituents by speaking his mind on the subject. At a meeting at Leeds in the beginning of 1855, after he had condemned the policy leading up to the outbreak of hostilities, the opposition party carried a resolution against him, and demanded that the war should be carried on with vigour. Many, but not all, of the professed Free Traders were with their old leaders on this occasion; and of course the recognised advocates of international arbitration were thoroughly united on the same side. Foremost amongst them were the members of the Society of Friends; and much indignation was caused by the action of this body in sending a deputation to Russia in the interests of peace—whereby, it was alleged, the Czar was confirmed in his delusion that the English people were not at one with their rulers in the pending negotiations. The deputation consisted of Mr. Sturge of Birmingham, Mr. Pease of Darlington, and Mr. Charlton of Bristol; and it is to be observed that they left England on their fruitless mission before it was known that an actual rupture had taken place, and before the Russian Ambassador had been recalled. At St. Petersburg the three Friends sought an interview with

the Emperor Nicholas (February 1854), and expressed to him their sorrow at the prospect of a war between England and Russia. The Czar declared that he abhorred war as much as they did, and that he was quite ready to forget what had passed if an opportunity were given him. But the final steps had been taken before the deputation reached home again.

That some mischief was caused by this act, in the way already mentioned, is quite possible. The Czar is recorded to have said, shortly before, to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, that he had studied and quite understood the condition and temper of England. “Your Foreign Office,” he continued, “speaks as if we did not know that England has her weak point. My dear Sir Hamilton, we have mastered the whole subject of the ‘School of Manchester.’ . . . Nothing escapes us, we comprehend the Society of Friends.” Mr. Kinglake, who relates this anecdote in the first volume of his work on *The Invasion of the Crimea*, says in another place that England had been misunderstood for some time on the Continent. She was thought to be declining in a military sense. There had been “a general decrying of arms.” “Well-meaning men harangued and lectured in this spirit. What they sincerely desired was a continuance of peace; but instead of taking the thought and acquiring the knowledge which might have qualified them to warn their fellow-countrymen against steps tending to a needless war, they squandered their indignation upon the deceased authors of former wars, and used language of such preposterous breadth that what they said was as applicable to one war as to another. At length they generated a sect called the ‘Peace Party,’ which denounced war in strong indiscriminative terms.”

This is not a precisely accurate description of the attitude assumed by Mr. Bright and his friends, who certainly did not shirk the special circumstances of the quarrel with

Russia. The complaint against them was that they dealt too openly with these circumstances, and were not sufficiently patriotic to swim with the stream after the war had broken out. The passages above quoted from Mr. Bright's letters were by no means "as applicable to one war as to another;" and the very definition of the Crimean War as unjust amounted to a discrimination between wars which were more or less just, and more or less inevitable.

Elsewhere Mr. Kinglake writes:—"Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright had shut themselves out from the counsels of the nation. They were powerless. By their indiscriminate denunciations of war in general, they had destroyed the worth of any criticism they could bring to bear upon the pending dispute. Their arguments, however well pruned and shaped out to suit the occasion, were sure of being treated by an English audience as the offspring of their doctrines; and their doctrines being repudiated, they could make no good use of their privilege of speech. It was impossible to consult with them upon the question whether the country was bound in honour to take up arms for the Sultan, because they had spent their lives in teaching that the country could never be bound in honour to take up arms for anybody. If they had not thus disqualified themselves for useful argument, they would surely have been able to make a becoming stand against what Count Nesselrode called 'the most unintelligible war' ever known. But because they had been extravagant before, now they were null; and because they were null, the cause entrusted to their hands was brought to destruction."

However much truth there may be in this, it is to be remarked that Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and their friends were the only men in the kingdom of any eminence who warmly and publicly protested against what they believed to be a crime. They may or may not have been extravagant before, but now, as Mr. Kinglake admits, they were

practically right; and if they were not listened to, at any rate no one else gave the same advice or uttered the same convictions. The want of discrimination, surely, was on the part of the Government, the Opposition, and the public. Bright and Cobden discriminated only too well for their own popularity and peace of mind. If the nation as a whole went mad, and these men from the beginning saw the truth clearly and spoke it without fear, is not the presumption entirely in favour of the small minority, and does it not appear probable that there had been less of "extravagance" in their former expressions of opinion than of misconceived sense and wisdom?

Mr. Bright was not content with writing letters at the time of the Crimean War. He made many speeches in the House of Commons and on public platforms, from which we may gather more exactly the nature of the arguments applied by him to the cause which Mr. Kinglake charges him with bringing "to destruction."

When the declaration of war was announced by a Royal Message to Parliament, Mr. Bright took part in the debate with a prefatory admission that he was "like a physician proposing to prescribe to-day for a man who died yesterday." But, as he said, he felt that the country was entering on a policy which might affect its fortunes for a long time to come, and he was unwilling to lose the opportunity of explaining his opinions on the subject of the war, and of clearing himself "from any portion of the responsibility" which attached to those who supported the policy of the Government. "I shall not discuss this question," said Mr. Bright, "on the abstract principle of peace at any price, as it is termed, which is held by a small minority of persons in this country, founded on religious opinions which are not generally received, but I shall discuss it entirely on principles which are accepted by all the members of this House. I shall maintain that when we are deliberating on the question of

war, and endeavouring to prove its justice or necessity, it beoomes us to show that the interests of the country are clearly involved; that the objects for which the war is undertaken are probable, or, at least, possible of attainment; and further, that the end proposed to be accomplished is worth the cost and sacrifices which we are about to incur. I think these are fair principles on which to discuss the question, and I hope that when the noble lord the member for Tiverton (Lord Palmerston) rises during this debate, he will not assume that I have dealt with it on any other principles than these."

This is a complete answer to such objections as those raised by Mr. Kinglake against Mr. Bright's attitude during the Russian War; and it is absurd (however natural), after such a "discriminative" statement, to accuse the speaker of confining himself to vague and general denunciations of war. The whole of the long speech is kept studiously close to the special circumstances of the dispute with Russia. From beginning to end it is an admirable plea for peace, or at least for a just appreciation of the causes of the war, based on facts and documents, illustrated from precedent and from the existing state of the country, and enforced by appeals, not to general principles or abstract truths (unless it be in the peroration), but to the concrete interests of the nation. Nothing could be less indiscriminative, and nothing more "destructive" of the contentions of the war-makers.

Speaking of the interests of England as involved in the question, Mr. Bright maintained that there was no ground for saying that we were justified in going to war out of friendship for the Turks. It was not a matter of sympathy with any other State. "I," he said, "have sympathy with Turkey; I have sympathy with the serfs of Russia; I have sympathy with the people of Hungary, whose envoy the noble lord the member for Tiverton refused to see, and the

overthrow of whose struggle for freedom by the armies of Russia he needlessly justified in this House; I have sympathy with the Italians, subjects of Austria, Naples, and the Pope; I have sympathy with the three millions of slaves in the United States; but it is not on a question of sympathy that I dare involve this country, or any country, in a war which must cost an incalculable amount of treasure and of blood. It is not my duty to make this country the knight-errant of the human race, and to take upon herself the protection of the thousand millions of human beings who have been permitted by the Creator of all things to people this planet. I hope that no one will assume that I would invite—that is the phrase which has been used—the aggressions of Russia. If I were a Russian, speaking in a Russian Parliament, I should denounce any aggression on Turkey, as I now blame the policy of our own Government; and I greatly fear I should find myself in a minority, as I now find myself in a minority on this question. But it has never yet been explained how the interests of this country are involved in the present dispute. We are not going to fight for tariffs, or for markets for our exports. In 1791 Mr. Grey argued that, as our imports from Russia exceeded £1,000,000 sterling, it was not desirable that we should go to war with a country trading with us to that amount. In 1853, Russia exported to this country at least £14,000,000 sterling, and that fact affords no proof of the increasing barbarism of Russia, or of any disregard of her own interests as respects the development of her resources."

The reasoning was very close; but Mr. Bright felt it must miss its mark on the minds of his hearers, and he could not resist a home-thrust of another sort, which was certain to tell upon them. The property-tax, he said, was "the lever, or the weapon, with which the proprietors of lands and houses in this kingdom will have to support the 'integrity and independence' of the Ottoman Empire.

Gentlemen, I congratulate you that every man of you has a Turk upon his shoulders ! ”

In a concluding passage Mr. Bright enunciates the principles in which he and his friends—the despised “peace party”—justified their opposition to the impending war.

“I am told (he said) that the war is popular, and that it is foolish and eccentric to oppose it. I doubt if the war is very popular in this House. But as to what is or has been popular, I may ask, What was more popular than the American War? There were persons lately living in Manchester who had seen the recruiting party going through the principal streets of that city, accompanied by the parochial clergy in full canonicals, exhorting the people to enlist to put down the rebels in the American colonies. Where is now the popularity of that disastrous and disgraceful war, and who is the man to defend it? But if hon. members will turn to the correspondence between George III. and Lord North on the subject of that war, they will find that the King’s chief argument for continuing the war was that it would be dishonourable in him to make peace so long as the war was popular with the people. Again, what war could be more popular than the French war? Has not the noble lord (Lord John Russell) said, not long ago, in this House, that peace was rendered difficult if not impossible by the conduct of the English press in 1803? For myself, I do not trouble myself whether my conduct in Parliament is popular or not. I care only that it shall be wise and just as regards the permanent interests of my country, and I despise from the bottom of my heart the man who speaks a word in favour of this war, or of any war which he believes might have been avoided, merely because the press and a portion of the people urge the Government to enter into it.

“I recollect a passage of a distinguished French writer and statesman which bears strongly upon our present posi-

tion. He says:—"The country which can comprehend and act upon the lessons which God has given it in the past events of its history is secure in the most imminent crises of its fate." The past events of our history have taught me that the intervention of this country in European wars is not only unnecessary, but calamitous; that we have rarely come out of such intervention having succeeded in the objects we fought for; that a debt of £800,000,000 sterling has been incurred by the policy which the noble lord approves, apparently for no other reason than that it dates from the time of William III.; and that not debt alone has been incurred, but that we have left Europe at least as much in chains as before a single effort was made by us to rescue her from tyranny. I believe if this country, seventy years ago, had adopted the principle of non-intervention in every case where her interests were not directly and obviously assailed, that she would have been saved from much of the pauperism and brutal crimes by which Government and people have alike been disgraced. This country might have been a garden, every dwelling might have been of marble, and every person who treads its soil might have been sufficiently educated. We should indeed have had less of military glory. We might have had neither Trafalgar nor Waterloo; but we should have set the high example of a Christian nation, free in its institutions, courteous and just in its conduct towards all foreign States, and resting its policy on the unchangeable foundation of Christian morality."

Mr. Bright made a long speech in the House of Commons on June 7th, 1855, after the failure of the Vienna Conference to bring the war to a close. Lord Aberdeen had given way to Lord Palmerston, and it had been determined to prosecute the siege of Sebastopol with renewed vigour; but Mr. Bright did not hesitate on that account to plead for peace in eloquent and moving terms. He was able to do

this with greater force than in the previous year, for the sacrifices made by the three contending Powers had been very great. His chief argument was against the stringent condition imposed upon Russia as a *sine quâ non* of peace, according to which her fleets were to be perpetually excluded from the Black Sea. Mr. Bright thought this condition unwarrantable, and too galling to be forced upon a Great Power, especially at the enormous cost which it was necessary for England and France to pay for it. Of course his contentions had no chance of being accepted by Englishmen in their then frame of mind, and under the guidance of a statesman like Lord Palmerston.

With the war there had grown up in the country a spirit of vainglory and braggadocio. Men were openly counselling the Government to persevere in the war until the power of Russia was utterly destroyed; until Poland and the Caucasian tribes were free again, and the map of Europe was restored to the shape which it presented before Russian aggrandisement had begun. Mr. Bright had no difficulty in emphasizing the folly of this wild talk; but the candour with which he maintained that England would never be able to dismember Russia to such an extent was by no means acceptable to his hearers. He appealed, reasonably enough, to his warnings of a year ago. There were members in the House, he said, who thought that, even if the terms then demanded of Russia were obtained, they would still be in no degree a compensation for the enormous sacrifices which the country has made. "I happen to hold the same opinion, and it was with that conviction that I protested against going into the war. Indeed, I think that the argument I used a year ago, that nothing to be obtained in the war could at all approach a compensation for the enormous sacrifices the country would be called upon to make, has been greatly strengthened."

But the very fact that Mr. Bright's arguments of a year

ago had been justified by circumstances told against him in the matter of personal popularity. It was as though his predictions were supposed to have worked out their fulfilment, and to have brought on his country the evils which had happened to it. Assuredly there were not wanting men who accused the Peace Party of some share in the enormous losses of our army and our navy before Constantinople, and who held that the Crimean troubles ought to be visited upon those who had condemned the war from the beginning!

With regard to the main question at issue in the second stage of the Russian War—the supremacy of the Black Sea—Mr. Bright's reasoning was again close and precise, the very opposite of indiscriminate declamation and antipathy to war in the abstract. "The preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea," he observed in one passage,—“as I think my hon. friend the member for the West Riding (Mr. Cobden) showed very clearly the other evening—is in a certain sense a fact which all the negotiations in the world cannot write off. I see that one of the public journals this morning, commenting upon my hon. friend's speech, says, ‘Yes, truly, the commercial preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea is a fact which cannot be denied;’ and then proceeds to argue that it does not follow that Russia should have a political and naval preponderance. But I do not know any case in which there is a commercial supremacy in a sea like the Black Sea that is not followed by a preponderance of every other kind. The question now is, however, how is that preponderance to cease?”

Mr. Bright's speeches are always concise and pithy; and there are numerous passages, in the one from which we have quoted, illustrating his most lively and epigrammatic style. "Some honourable gentlemen," he says by way of parenthesis, "talk as if Russia were a Power which you could take to Bow Street, and bind over before some stipendiary magistrate to keep the peace for six months. Russia is a

great Power, as England is, and in treating with her you must consider that the Russian Government has to consult its own dignity, its own interests, and public opinion, just as much at least as the Government of this country."

In another place, speaking of the bases of negotiation with Russia, he says:—"I recollect a question asked of a child at school, in one of those lessons called 'object lessons,'—'What is the basis of a batter pudding?' It was obvious that flour was the basis, but the eggs and the butter and the rest were developments and additions. But if the bases are capable of development, so I take it for granted that the meaning of negotiation is not the offering of an *ultimatum*, but the word involves to every man's sense the probability of concession—batter, it may be—but concession of one sort or another."

In this same speech the orator found some very severe and cutting things to say of Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell. One brilliantly satirical passage is well worth reading in its entirety:—

"What of late could be more remarkable than the caprices of the noble lord the member for London? When that noble lord was in the Government of Lord Aberdeen he went to Greenock, I think to Bedford, and certainly to Bristol—and, in fact, he took every opportunity which offered itself of bringing himself before the public; and with his power of speech, his long experience, and eminent character, did his utmost to stimulate the feelings of the people to a policy which I believe to be destructive, and which I think the majority of this House in calm moments does not believe to have been the wisest which could have been pursued. It certainly appears to me to be unjustifiable that, while Lord Aberdeen was honestly endeavouring to bring the negotiations to a peaceful conclusion, the noble lord was taking a course which rendered statesmanship valueless in conducting the foreign policy of the nation. . . . I am afraid, sir, to trust myself to speak of the conduct of the noble lord on that occasion. I presume that we shall have to wait for the advent of that Somersetshire historian, whose coming the noble lord expects, before we know whether his conduct on that occasion was, what some persons still call it, treachery to his chief, or whether it arose from that description of

moral cowardice which in every man is the death of all true statesmanship. But in the year 1852 the noble lord the member for London gave me a strong reason why I should feel no confidence in his present chief. The House will remember that he then ejected the present First Minister, under whom he now serves, from the Cabinet of which he himself was then the head, and in the explanation which he made to the House he told us that men like Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, men of age, of authority, and experience, had been able in some degree to control his noble friend, but that he being younger than the noble lord, and having been a shorter time on the political stage, had found it difficult to control him. The description which the noble lord might give of his colleague is a little like that which we occasionally see given of a runaway horse—that he got the bit between his teeth, and there was no holding him.

“The noble lord the member for London was the captain of the State vessel, and the noble lord the member for Tiverton was the mate. But how is it now? The noble lord the member for the City of London has accepted the position of mate in the most perilous times, in the most tempestuous weather, and he goes to sea with no chart, on a most dangerous and interminable voyage, and with the very reckless captain whom he would not trust as a mate. Sir, the noble lord the member for London has made a defence of his conduct at the Conferences at Vienna. I am willing to give him credit that he did then honestly intend peace; but I do think that when he goes again, and on such a journey, he will do well to leave some of his historic knowledge behind him. They were indeed historic fancies. There is nothing to me so out of place as the comparison which the noble lord made between the limitation of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea and the destruction of Dunkirk, or between the condition of the Black Sea and that of the lakes of North America. The noble lord can never have heard of the Falls of Niagara. If there were Falls like them between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean the cases would be somewhat similar, for the Russian fleet in the Black Sea would not then be exposed to the assaults of the vast navies of England or France. When I allude to this subject, I am reminded of that Welshman whom Shakespeare has immortalised, who found some analogy between a river in Macedon and a river in Monmouth. He knew the name of the river in Monmouth, and he did not know the name of the river in Macedon, but he insisted upon the analogy between them because there were salmon in both.

“Well, sir, I now come to the noble lord at the head of the Government. I do not complain that he is at the head of the Government.

The noble lord the member for the City of London had thrown everything into such inextricable and unlooked-for confusion that anyone next door to him must necessarily occupy the place. But I cannot have confidence in the noble viscount, because I cannot but recollect that in 1850 he received the condemnation of his foreign policy in the other House of Parliament; and in a speech which I shall never forget, the last and one of the best ever delivered by the greatest statesman of the time, he received a similar condemnation, and the noble viscount only escaped condemnation by a direct vote of this House by the energetic defence of the noble lord the member for the City of London, and by the stress laid upon many members on this side of the House. But only six weeks after this the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) presented to the noble viscount a letter from his Sovereign, which I cannot but think must have cost him much pain, and to which I will not refer further, except to say that I do not know how it is possible, if the contents of that letter were true, that either the noble lord or the House can be called upon to place implicit confidence in the noble lord the leader of the Government.

“I have observed the noble viscount’s conduct ever since I have had the honour of a seat in this House, and the noble viscount will excuse me if I state the reason why I have often opposed him. The reason is, that the noble viscount treats all these questions, and the House itself, with such a want of seriousness that it has appeared to me that he has no serious, or sufficiently serious, conviction of the important business that so constantly comes before this House. I regard the noble viscount as a man who has experience, but who with experience has not gained wisdom—as a man who has age, but who, with age, has not the gravity of age, and who, now occupying the highest seat of power, has—and I say it with pain—not appeared influenced by a due sense of the responsibility that belongs to that elevated position.”

This was unquestionably a strong and effective reply to the many sneers and disparagements which Lord Palmerston had heaped upon Mr. Bright since he entered the House of Commons. It was severe, and Mr. Bright suffered for it afterwards. But it cannot be said to have been lacking either in dignity or in justification, whilst it was certainly never exceeded in pungency by Lord Palmerston himself.

Something yet remains to be said of the general policy of the Peace Party; and nowhere should we look for an

explanation of this policy, or at any rate for the sentiments on which it was based, rather than in the speeches or writings of Mr. Bright. The letter to Mr. Absalom Watkin—from which one remark has already been cited—is an admirable specimen of its author's written eloquence. It is as logical, as persuasive, as witty as anything that has proceeded from his pen; and it comprises, as Mr. Thorold Rogers has said of it, an explanation of the alternative policy recommended by Mr. Bright—“a policy which was as wise and just as it was unfortunately unpopular.”

Mr. Watkin, a personal friend of the member for Manchester, had written to him from that town inviting him to a meeting on behalf of the Patriotic Fund; and he saw fit to give his opinion that the war with Russia was justified by the authority of *Vattel*. On this remark Mr. Bright is exquisitely humorous. Declining the invitation to the meeting, on the ground that it would scarcely be a fitting occasion for a discussion as to the justice of the war, he says:—“I am not surprised at the difference between your opinion and mine, if you decide a question of this nature by an appeal to *Vattel*. The ‘law of nations’ is not my law, and at best it is a code full of confusion and contradictions, having its foundation on custom, and not on a higher morality; and on custom which has always been determined by the will of the strongest. It may be a question of some interest whether the first crusade was in accordance with the law and principles of *Vattel*; but whether the first crusade was just, and whether the policy of the crusades was a wise policy, is a totally different question. I have no doubt that the American war was a just war according to the principles laid down by writers on the ‘law of nations,’ and yet no man in his senses in this country will now say that the policy of George III. towards the American colonies was a wise policy, or that war a righteous war. The French war, too, was doubtless just according to the

same authorities; for there were fears and anticipated dangers to be combatted, and law and order to be sustained in Europe; and yet few intelligent men now believe the French war to have been either necessary or just. You must excuse me if I refuse altogether to pin my faith upon *Vattel*. There have been writers on international law who have attempted to show that private assassination and the poisoning of wells were justifiable in war; and perhaps it would be difficult to demonstrate wherein these horrors differ from some of the practices which are now in vogue. I will not ask you to mould your opinion on these points by such writers, nor shall I submit my judgment to that of *Vattel*."

But finer even than this commentary on the remarks of his ingenuous correspondent is the general style and composition of the letter—which was printed in pamphlet form and circulated widely amongst the writer's constituents. *Vattel* had been brought to bear upon Mr. Bright, though by a friendly hand, to confute and confound him; and it behoved him in rejecting such an august authority to combat his arguments by others of at least equal force. Accordingly, the pamphlet consists in great measure of citations from the highest authorities. It quotes the blue-books and newspapers of the day, *Eastern Papers*, letters of Lord Carlisle, Lord Stratford, Count Nesselrode, Lord Westmoreland, the Earl of Clarendon, Sir G. H. Seymour, Lord Cowley, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, Colonel Rose, Lord John Russell, Lord Palmerston, and others, and most carefully gives chapter and verse for every word. The answer is complete; and the policy is brought out with considerable clearness.

Mr. Bright divides his subject into two parts. Was it right for England to interfere in a quarrel between Russia and Turkey? and, after the interference, was it right to persist in it when the Russian Government had accepted the

Vienna Note? In both cases the reply is in the negative. We ought not to have interfered in the quarrel in such a manner that our action in the last extremity was entirely dependent upon that of Turkey—with so little prudence that, when the Porte declared war without our sanction, we had no choice left but to plunge into the fray. "My doctrine would have been non-intervention in this case," wrote Mr. Bright. "The danger of the Russian power was a phantom"—and here comes a quotation from a recent speech of Lord Palmerston's, in which the latter declared that Russia was "nearly powerless for any purpose of offence." "The necessity of permanently upholding the Mahometan rule in Europe is an absurdity." "The evils of non-intervention were remote and vague, and could be neither weighed nor described in any accurate terms." And again, "The whole policy of our Government in this matter is marked with an imbecility without example. . . . At this moment England is engaged in a murderous warfare with Russia, although the Russian Government accepted her own terms of peace, and has been willing to accept them in the sense of England's own interpretation of them ever since they were offered; and at the same time England is allied with Turkey, whose Government rejected the award of England, and who entered into the war in opposition to the advice of England. Surely, when the Vienna Note was accepted by Russia, the Turks should have been prevented from going to war, or should have been allowed to go to war at their own risk."

The crime—the "terrible crime," as Mr. Bright maintained it to be—had already been attended by consequences of the utmost gravity, which were in themselves an emphatic condemnation. What had the cost of our intervention been? A war which threatened to involve every country of Europe. Many, perhaps fifty millions sterling, expended by England alone, and "raised from the taxes of a people whose extrication from ignorance and poverty can only be hoped for

from the continuance of peace." Beyond that, the disturbance of trade, the derangement of the money markets, difficulties and ruin to thousands of families.

"Another year of high prices of food, notwithstanding a full harvest in England, chiefly because war interferes with imports, and we have declared our principal foreign food-growers to be our enemies. The loss of human life to an enormous extent. Many thousands of our own countrymen have already perished of pestilence and in the field; and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of English families will be plunged into sorrow, as a part of the penalty to be paid for the folly of the nation and its rulers. When the time comes for the 'inquisition for blood,' who shall answer for these things? You have read the tidings from the Crimea; you have, perhaps, shuddered at the slaughter; you remember the terrific picture—I speak not of the battle, and the charge, and the tumultuous excitement of the conflict, but of the field after the battle—Russians, in their frenzy or their terror, shooting Englishmen who would have offered them water to quench their agony of thirst; Englishmen, in crowds, rifling the pockets of the men they had slain or wounded, taking their few shillings or roubles, and discovering among the plunder of the stiffening corpses images of the 'Virgin and the Child.' You have read this, and your imagination has followed the fearful details. This is war—every crime which human nature can commit or imagine, every horror it can perpetrate or suffer; and this it is which our Christian Government recklessly plunges into, and which so many of our countrymen at this moment think it patriotic to applaud! You must excuse me if I cannot go with you."

Here spoke the Tribune of the People, and in these words we doubtless have the genuine bases on which the apostles of the modern Peace Party founded their policy and their doctrines.





CHAPTER XII.

THE POLICIES OF WAR AND PEACE.

THE Peace Party would have effected little if they had confined themselves to protesting against war, in theory or in reality, and to urging the duty of non-intervention in the quarrels of other nations. This merely passive policy, however it might have been justified by argument or illustration, and whatever sanction it might have gained by the adhesion of intelligent men, or of the masses, would never have given universal satisfaction—and indeed it would have been constantly discredited by the course of events. Non-intervention might enable the country practising it as a settled policy to keep out of expensive or ruinous wars; but there would always be other countries bent on intervening when a favourable chance arose; and thus war would hardly be decreased for the world in general.

In order to stem the tide of war, and to establish peace on sure foundations, with a reasonable prospect of continuance, a more active policy is required, and something like a propaganda of new principles and precepts. It is not enough for the more enlightened nations to keep themselves out of disputes; they must strengthen the knees of weak brethren,

and originate methods applicable outside their own borders. Switzerland, Sweden, perhaps we might add the United States, avoid war as one of the worst imaginable evils; but their example alone is not very likely to cure other nations of the habit. The gradual progress of enlightenment bids fair to do this sooner or later, but the conversion of the world has been hastened by the dissemination of doctrines which Cobden, Bright, and the Peace Party did so much to shape and develop.

The idea itself of international arbitration for the settlement of State quarrels without war is not a new one. It had inspired the dreams of poets and optimists for many generations; and it is, of course, based upon the noblest traditions and aspirations of mankind. Moreover it is akin, by one side of its nature, with international concert, though concert has been misused for the purposes of tyrants and aggressors more frequently than for the objects of peace. It was a partial international concert which robbed and violated the unfortunate Poles; and other such concerts have crushed freedom in Spain, propped up an obscene tyranny in Turkey, limited (and afterwards extended) the freedom of the Greeks, and reduced the Danish kingdom to comparative inanition. The Holy Alliance was an international concert, which did some of the most unholy things recorded in the modern history of Europe. European concert fought and mastered the gigantic power of the first Napoleon; but the same concert had first of all unwarrantably attacked the French Republic, demoralising what might otherwise have become a stable and prosperous State; whilst it ended by redistributing the soil of Europe on an imperfect and confused scheme of "nationalities," thereby causing pretexts for a dozen future wars.

In later years, under the single-minded guidance of Mr. Gladstone, acting on the best traditions of English statesmanship, European concert has come to mean something

better than it had ever done before, and has really promoted freedom and peace instead of oppression and war. No doubt it is still a most imperfect instrument, dangerous in its use, and available only in a very limited sense. It served to give partial effect to the Treaty of Berlin in the interests of Montenegro and Greece, but only by compromising claims which were logically indefeasible. It bestowed a Constitution on Bulgaria; but it could not prevent a foreign despot from trampling on that Constitution by acts of the grossest illegality. Concert has its merits, great and indisputable; but it must be perfected and purified before it can be identified with, or even lend much assistance to, the movement which aims at international arbitration.

Concert may promote arbitration when the States of the world, of the European community, grow thoroughly tired of war—in other words, when the government of the several nations is in the hands of the people rather than of oligarchies and despots. Democracies cannot fight as readily or willingly as monarchies and aristocracies, because the costs and pains of warfare are infinitely more burdensome to the people at large than to the minorities which are comparatively free from these penalties. It is true that the wealthier classes suffer in time of war by the death or disablement of individual members; but these members have eagerly faced the risks for the sake of the splendid chances of the battlefield, and for the certainty of emolument and honour for those who survive. So long as the career of an officer in the army or navy is sought after as a fashionable and lucrative one, it is not likely that the classes from which officers are mainly drawn will be disposed to decry war as being in itself an evil.

But the nations are becoming more and more democratic, whether we like it or not; and the natural consequence is that there has already been a perceptible diminution in the tendency to decide international quarrels by the sword.

States fight less readily to-day than they fought a hundred, or even fifty or thirty years ago. Except the unfortunate war against Russia, waged by England in 1854, the wars of the past half-century in Europe have scarcely ever been the outcome of wanton predisposition on the part of thoroughly civilised States. Most of the wars, great or small, in Europe or European dependencies, have been the result of arbitrary aggression; and the number of these (now that Germany has secured her long-coveted unification) is likely to diminish in the future. England, it is clear, will not readily fight again for any cause, however plausible. The three Empires may fight until the populations of Russia, Germany, and Austria insist on managing their own affairs. France, it may be confidently asserted, will not be much inclined to follow up the precedent of 1870 on the northern side of the Mediterranean, however determined she may be to adopt a vigorous colonial policy. We shall doubtless have exceptions to note and lament in every decade, but the signs of the times all point to a more general acceptance of the conditions of peace in preference to war, and to the methods of peaceful settlement rather than the constant arbitrament of the sword.

Mr. Thorold Rogers has forcibly supported similar contentions in a book already more than once quoted. As he points out, the rigour of military service is unacceptable—he might have said all but insupportable—in Germany, whilst the Russian Government finds an increasing difficulty in collecting its conscripts. There is not a single European country of which it could not be said that the people looked on war with horror. “The dynastic ambition of monarchs is, as time goes on, less and less capable of gratification. If these personages wish to wield the forces which they can obtain from their subjects for their own interests only, they are constrained to become their own ministers.” The cases of Russia in 1854, and France in 1870, show that despots

cannot reckon on the instruments which they employ, and are, therefore, liable to failure and ruin whenever they venture to play for high stakes. Hereafter, Mr. Rogers believes, it will be found that no great European army will be a trustworthy instrument of war, unless the government which employs it takes pains to make itself popular ;—but we may go further still, and question whether it will be so even in the case of a popular Government. The peoples, in fact, are all heartily sick of war. If there is an exception to this rule, it is in France ; but France has been placed in extraordinary difficulty since its overwhelming defeat in 1870–1, and we must grant it a longer delay than the other European nations require for the development of their peaceful tendencies.

May we then anticipate a speedy disarmament—without which it would, of course, be idle to look for a genuine international system of arbitration ? Perhaps not. Such a disarmament, as Mr. Rogers says, “ cannot occur till Europe becomes Republican ”—or at any rate thoroughly democratic in its institutions. “ It is, I believe, a rule to which no exception occurs, that when perfect political equality is established in any community, and the whole machinery of Government is brought under the control of the popular will and public opinion, war becomes an anachronism and an impossibility. And the reason is that military forces are simply defensive under such institutions, and that when all nations cease to be aggressive the contingency of war is at an end. That a free nation should attempt to bring another nation into subjection, or attack it in order to vindicate its honour, is an absurdity. It is only because those who stimulate wars escape all the consequence of the evil which is inflicted, and reap all the advantages of success, that war can be carried on at all.”

These were the principles on which Mr. Bright, even more than Cobden, argued and acted. Cobden considered

war as an anachronism and a barbarism, "a stupid means of doing that which would be much better effected by a rational diplomacy and arbitration." John Bright went further, and thought it a moral crime which could scarcely under any circumstances be justified. Cobden would admit a war of self-defence—as he understood the American war to be on the part of the North; but his friend, if hard pressed, would with difficulty have made the same admission. Both, however, agreed that arbitration ought to be employed instead of, and to avoid the contingency of, war. Both admitted that arbitration was the natural instrument of the people, as war was of monarchs and their ministers. And accordingly both, though one more distinctly than the other, believed that England's foreign policy would never be sane and sound until the English people were more completely masters of their own destinies.

Mr. Bright gave utterance to his views on the subject of a rational foreign policy in a vigorous speech at Birmingham in 1858, when he was elected member for the borough after Manchester had rejected him. He summed up a masterly review of our military history for several generations past by a comprehensive expression of contempt for our traditional war-policy of the past. "The more you examine this matter," he said, "the more you will come to the conclusion which I have arrived at, that this foreign policy, this regard for 'the liberties of Europe,' this care at one time for 'the Protestant interests,' this excessive love for the 'balance of power,' is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of out-door relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain. I observe that you receive that declaration as if it were some new and important discovery. In 1815, when the great war with France was ended, every Liberal in England, whose politics, whose hopes, and whose faith had not been crushed out of him by the tyranny of the time of that war, was fully aware of this, and openly

admitted it; and up to 1832, and for some years afterwards, it was the fixed and undoubted creed of the great Liberal party. But somehow all is changed. We who stand upon the old landmarks, who walk in the old paths, who would conserve what is wise and prudent, are hustled and shoved about as if we were come to turn the world upside down. The change which has taken place seems to confirm the opinion of a lamented friend of mine, who, not having succeeded in all his hopes, thought that men made no progress whatever, but went round and round like a squirrel in a cage. The idea is now so general that it is our duty to meddle everywhere, that it really seems as if we had pushed the Tories from the field, expelling them by our competition."

Mr. Bright took occasion strenuously to protest against "a system which binds us in all these networks and complications." He denied that the country could gain an atom of advantage from the diplomacy and war-making in which statesmen had so long put their trust. Glory might be worth something, as he admitted; but it was not always glory. The speaker, indeed, had ready to his hand a most telling illustration of his argument that the kind of foreign policy favoured by Lord Palmerston was not invariably attended by glory to the country. "We have," he said, "within the last few years had despatches from Vienna and from St. Petersburg, which, if we had not deserved them, would have been very offensive and not a little insolent. We have had the Ambassador of the Queen expelled summarily from Madrid, and we have had an Ambassador driven almost with ignominy from Washington. We have blockaded Athens for a claim which was known to be false. We have quarrelled with Naples, for we chose to give advice to Naples, which was not received in the submissive spirit expected from her, and our Minister was therefore withdrawn. Not three years ago, too, we seized a considerable kingdom in India, with which our Government had but

recently entered into the most solemn treaty, which every lawyer in England and in Europe, I believe, would consider binding before God and the world. We deposed its monarch; we committed a great immorality and a great crime, and we have reaped an almost instantaneous retribution in the most gigantic and sanguinary revolt which probably any nation ever made against its conquerors. Within the last few years we have had two wars with a great empire, which we are told contains at least one-third of the whole human race. The first war was called, and appropriately called, the Opium War. No man, I believe, with a spark of morality in his composition, no man who cares anything for the opinion of his fellow-countrymen, has dared to justify that war. The war which has just been concluded, if it has been concluded, had its origin in the first war; for the enormities committed in the first war are the foundation of the implacable hostility which it is said the inhabitants of Canton bear to all persons connected with the English name." And yet, though we had these troubles in India—a vast country which we do not know how to govern, and a war with China—"a country with which, though everybody else can remain at peace, we cannot"—such was the inveterate habit of conquest, such the insatiable lust of territory, that there were men at that moment who were urging the Government to fresh aggressions in the East.

The orator then dwelt upon the expenditure caused by this policy—which led us, amongst other things, to adopt "a defiant and insolent tone towards foreign countries." In the Press, as in Parliament, public writers and speakers were constantly giving offence to our allies and connections abroad. Englishmen were given to delusions and suspicions when in reality they were as safe and free from danger as it was possible for them to be. Mr. Bright sighed for a revolution of opinion on this matter, and showed in what sense he would have the revolution to take effect.

"I believe (he said) there is no permanent greatness to a nation except it be based upon morality. I do not care for military greatness or military renown. I care for the condition of the people among whom I live. There is no man in England who is less likely to speak irreverently of the Crown and Monarchy of England than I am; but crowns, coronets, mitres, military display, the pomp of war, wide colonies, and a huge empire, are, in my view, all trifles light as air, and not worth considering, unless with them you can have a fair share of comfort, contentment, and happiness among the great body of the people. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions, do not make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage; and unless the light of your Constitution can shine there, unless the beauty of your legislation and the excellence of your statesmanship are impressed there on the feelings and condition of the people, rely upon it you have yet to learn the duties of Government.

"I have not, as you have observed, pleaded that this country should remain without adequate and scientific means of defence. I acknowledge it to be the duty of your statesmen, acting upon the known opinions and principles of ninety-nine out of every hundred persons in the country, at all times, with all possible moderation, but with all possible efficiency, to take steps which shall preserve order within and on the confines of your kingdom. But I shall repudiate and denounce the expenditure of every shilling, the engagement of every man, the employment of every ship which has no object but intermeddling in the affairs of other countries, and endeavouring to extend the boundaries of an empire which is already large enough to satisfy the greatest ambition, and I fear is much too large for the highest statesmanship to which any man has yet attained.

"The most ancient of profane historians has told us that the Scythians of his time were a very warlike people, and

that they elevated an old cimeter upon a platform as a symbol of Mars, for to Mars alone, I believe, they built altars and offered sacrifices. To this cimeter they offered sacrifices of horses and cattle, the main wealth of the country, and more costly sacrifices than to all the rest of their gods. I often ask myself whether we are not at all advanced in one respect beyond those Scythians. What are our contributions to charity, to education, to morality, to religion, to justice, and to civil government, when compared with the wealth we expend in sacrifices to the old cimeter? Two nights ago I addressed in this hall a vast assembly composed to a great extent of your countrymen who have no political power, who are at work from the dawn of the day to the evening, and who have therefore limited means of informing themselves on these great subjects. Now I am privileged to speak to a somewhat different audience. . . . You can mould opinion, you can create political power. You cannot think a good thought on this subject, and communicate it to your neighbours—you cannot make these points topics of discussion in your social circles and more general meetings without affecting sensibly and speedily the course which the Government of your country will pursue. May I ask you, then, to believe, as I do most devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once, it may not come in our lifetime ; but, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet when he says,—

“The sword of heaven is not in haste to smite,
Nor yet doth linger.”

We have experience, we have beacons, we have landmarks enough. We know what the past has cost us, we know how

much and how far we have wandered ; but we are not left without a guide. It is true we have not, as an ancient people had, Urim and Thummim—those oraculous gems on Aaron's breast—from which to take counsel, but we have the unchangeable and external principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation or our people a happy people."

The recognition of morality as a national policy, and an international guide and sanction, was of course not new in Mr. Bright's mouth. It constitutes, however, an integral part of his system of ideas on the subject of peace and war, and may therefore be considered further in a future chapter.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE COST OF WAR.

IF humanity, morality, reason, and common sense declare so strongly against the policy which leads up to and decides everything by an appeal to war, the economical considerations which are involved in the same question are no less urgent and convincing in their character. And indeed they are from many points of view the most important considerations of all; for the cost of war affects the masses of the people in a more special and particular manner than any other. The poor are the vast majority in every State; and it is the poor who feel most shrewdly the pressure of extraordinary taxation, the paralysis of trade, and the interruption of industrial pursuits. England, again, suffers from these evils of war more than other countries, in proportion as she is more deeply engaged in commercial enterprises and manufactures. No great war of all that we have ever fought has failed to throw the humbler ranks of society into terrible destitution, leaving its traces upon them for years to come. The expenditure which figures in estimates, which is raised in loans and added to the National Debts, is only a portion—often a small portion—of the total cost of the wars. The remainder falls more indirectly

upon the shoulders of the nation at large, but its incidence is direct and heavy enough when measured by the sufferings of the poor.

The vast armaments of Europe—which have been calculated to amount to no less than twelve millions of men on a war footing—impose almost inconceivable burdens on the unhappy taxpayers. The cost of maintaining these armaments, with the added loss of productive labour due to the withdrawal of so many men from peaceful occupations, can hardly be estimated at less than five hundred millions sterling every year; though some would put it at a much higher figure. The secondary cost, however, beyond what is set down in the national budgets, is an element which cannot be accurately or even approximately gauged. It is undefined, vague, incalculable; but there is no room to doubt that it is large enough to extinguish all the pauperism existing in Europe, and to relieve the tax-paying classes of a very considerable portion of the oppressive weight now laid upon them.

The tracts of the Peace Society contains much serviceable information on this subject, and many statistics which put the question of the cost of war in a very striking light. Thus the armaments of Europe, as they stood in 1877—taking the six Great Powers—are stated in approximate terms as follows:—

	Population.	Army (peace footing).	Army (war footing).	Navy (tonnage).	National Debt. £
Russia (European)	80 millions	800,000	1,600,000	80,000	260 millions
Germany	45	800,000	1,400,000	85,000	150
France	37	750,000	1,300,000	100,000	780
Austria	33	400,000	800,000	65,000	360
Italy	23	200,000	450,000	100,000	400
Great Britain	33	150,000	400,000	200,000	730

The cost of recent European wars, from 1854 to the present date, may be calculated in round numbers as follows:—

Crimean War	£340,000,000
Italian War of 1859	60,000,000
American Civil War—the North	940,000,000
" the South	460,000,000
Schleswig-Holstein War	7,000,000
Austrian and Prussian War, 1866	66,000,000
Expeditions to Mexico, Morocco, Paraguay, &c. (say only)	40,000,000
Franco-Prussian War	500,000,000
Russian and Turkish Wars	750,000,000
Afghan and other English Wars	25,000,000
	<hr/>
	£3,188,000,000

The writer of one of the tracts just referred to, dealing with these totals (exclusive of the last two), computes that the aggregate expenditure of a quarter of a century of war "would allow £2 for every man, woman, and child on the habitable globe. It would afford a present of £100 to every person in England and Wales. It would erect and furnish 2000 such institutions as the beautiful Crystal Palace, near London. It would make two railways all round the world at £50,000 per mile each. It would thickly dot colleges, schools, and hospitals all over Europe. It would provide for every adult male in Europe (about fifty millions) a freehold farm of 100 acres in the United States of America. A northern manufacturer remarks that in Great Britain, even in time of *peace*, 'the actual workers of the kingdom work every day of the year, to pay the interest of the National Debt, twenty-six minutes; for the maintenance of our armaments, twenty-eight minutes a day; for the cost of collecting the taxes, five minutes a day; for the relief of the poor, nine minutes a day; for local taxes, nine minutes a day; for the cost of civil government, twelve minutes a day. Adding these together, we find our labourers working every day of the year one hour and twenty-nine minutes for the payment of our national and local taxes. Very nearly two-thirds of this time is occupied in producing the

cost of our war system—that is, of our National Debt and our armaments.’”

It need hardly be said that the Free Trade school and the Peace Party held strong views on the economical aspects of war, or that they lost no opportunity of pointing the moral of such facts and figures as we have given above. Messrs. Cobden and Bright, and all who have come after them in the discussion of the question, have found very forcible arguments ready to their lips in addressing English audiences on the cost of the military and naval establishments; and they have not failed to make the most of them. In a characteristically industrial and commercial country, it was impossible that men should hear with indifference a tale in which their own personal interests are so completely involved. The single fact that England, standing fifth in the list of Great Powers, so far as population is concerned, is second, and was for a long time first in the magnitude of her National Debt, is enough to convince every individual Englishman of the gigantic folly which would be committed by engaging in any future war unless it is absolutely thrust and forced upon us, and of the folly already committed by our rulers in pursuing what may not unfairly be called the policy of war.

Mr. Bright has always made a special point of the economical evils arising from the continued maintenance, on so wide a basis, of the military and naval institutions—pungently described by Cobden as a preserve for the younger sons of the aristocracy. His opinion in regard to this largest branch of our upas tree of expenditure was the same as his opinion of the national expenditure as a whole. He believed that it could not be greatly reduced until we had lowered the franchise to a point far below the level of the Act of 1832, and to this extension of reform he consequently applied himself without intermission. But, in the meantime, he was constant in his attacks upon the wasteful

application of public money to the purposes of war, whether actual or prospective. He felt convinced that the artizans and agricultural labourers would not long be possessed of electoral power before they effectually checked the lavishment of their hard-earned wages on mad and unjust enterprises, such as the Opium Wars, the Afghan aggression, and even the Crimean War. His anticipations have been partially, but not entirely, fulfilled since 1867. The Disraeli Reform Act, imperfect as it was—for it left out of account the vast agricultural population for whom the franchise has hitherto been demanded in vain—has yet produced this amongst other results, that a Liberal majority in the House of Commons has on nearly every occasion, however plausible, set its face against the undertaking of new wars. The resolution of the popular representatives, and of the general body of voters throughout the country, to resist all temptations and all appeals to their “imperial instincts,” is manifest enough. It has not, so far, proved to be absolutely unbending, but it is more and more confirmed by the experience of every year; and there is at last good reason to hope that the taxpayers who chiefly suffer from the pursuit of glory, or of promotion, or of commissions for the younger sons of the landed gentry, will steadfastly set their faces against any further employment—unless it be unquestionably beyond our control—of the fighting services of England.

When the nation fully comprehends this, military and naval retrenchment must speedily follow. Let the wealthier classes once perceive that the poorer classes will not permit the army or the navy to be used, and they will cease to insist upon an annual outlay of thirty millions to keep them up to their present figure. Then, and not till then, will an English Government be able or willing to induce the Governments of other Powers to agree to a national disarmament.

The English public generally does not care for a large army. It is not attracted, or greatly pleased, by the parade of such forces as we can muster on a review day. It would gladly undertake to hold the country safe by means of a volunteer army; and it will scarcely be said that it could not do this if it chose. The army as now constituted is really maintained for the sake of a minority of rich men, and for little else that can be mentioned, unless it be the power to indulge in aggression, or for the very doubtful advantage of being able to guarantee States like Turkey. Of course, there are the colonies and India to be thought of. To this subject we will return by-and-by; but in the meantime it is certain that the masses honestly believe themselves capable of governing the country without a large standing army.

Next to a new Reform Bill—or, rather, before it—public opinion in the lowest ranks of the voters required to be instructed; and Mr. Bright was just the man to do this thoroughly and effectively. We have seen how he could speak of war when discussing its abortiveness, its vanity, its injustice, its cruelty. He was equally graphic, equally vigorous, when denouncing it as profligate and wasteful.

In one place he tells the story of the Frenchwoman under the old *régime* who went (on ample precedent) to solicit from Necker a thousand crowns. Necker refused her, to her great surprise and indignation. "What can a thousand crowns be to the King?" she asked. "Madam," replied the conscientious financier, "a thousand crowns are the taxes of a whole village." Mr. Bright applied the story to England, in one of his speeches in the House of Commons. "I ask honourable gentlemen," he said, "what are the taxes of a whole village, and what they mean? They mean bareness of furniture, of clothing, and of the table in many a cottage in Lancashire, in Suffolk, and in Dorsetshire. They mean an absence of medical attendance for a sick wife, an absence of the school pence of three or

four little children—hopeless toil to the father of a family, penury through his life, a cheerless old age, and, if I may quote the language of a poet of humble life, at last—‘the little bell tolled hastily for the pauper’s funeral.’ That is what taxes mean. The hon. member for Dorsetshire spoke the other night in a manner rather flippant and hardly respectful to some of us on this question. But the labourers of Dorsetshire, as well as the weavers and spinners of Lancashire, are toiling, and must toil harder, longer, and with smaller remuneration for every single £100 that you extract in taxes from the people in excess of what is necessary for the just requirements of the Exchequer.”

Elsewhere, in the same speech, he refers to a suggestion which had been made from the Treasury bench, that the war with Russia—this was in 1855—might possibly endure for another six years, and that our resources would in the meantime be undiminished. “Six years,” he exclaims, “of this war, and our resources undiminished! Why, sir, six years of this war, at an annual expenditure of £70,000,000, give £420,000,000 to the side of the United States as against the condition of the people of this country. Am I, then, talking of trifles? Am I talking to sane men, that it is necessary to bring forward facts like these? I am amazed, when the newspaper press, when public speakers, when gentlemen on both sides of this House are so ready to listen and to speak upon questions relating to Turkey, to Servia, or to Schamyl, that I cannot get the House of Commons to consider a question so great as the expenditure of £420,000,000, and when we have to consider if we shall trust that vast issue in the hands of the noble lords and right hon. gentlemen on the Treasury bench.”

At the very outset of the Crimean War Mr. Bright was able to find in it apt and forcible illustrations for his arguments. In his speech of March, 1854, on the announcement of the declaration of hostilities, he pointed out that

the trade of the country was already suffering to an enormous extent, and that the prosperity of the nation had been most seriously impaired by the unsettlement of the public mind. "With regard to trade," he said, "I can speak with some authority as to the state of things in Lancashire. The Russian trade is not only at an end, but it is made an offence against the law to deal with any of our customers in Russia. The German trade is most injuriously affected by the uncertainty which prevails on the continent of Europe. The Levant trade, a very important branch, is almost extinguished in the present state of affairs in Greece, Turkey in Europe, and Syria. All property in trade is diminishing in value, whilst its burdens are increasing. The funds have fallen in value to the amount of about £120,000,000 sterling, and railway property is quoted at about £80,000,000 less than was the case a year ago. I do not pretend to ask the hon. member for Aylesbury (Mr. Layard) to put these losses, these great destructions of property, against the satisfaction he feels at the 'triumphant position' at which we have arrived. He may content himself with the dream that we are supporting the 'integrity and independence' of Turkey, though I doubt whether bringing three foreign armies on her soil, raising insurrections in her provinces, and hopelessly exhausting her finances, is a rational mode of maintaining her as an independent Power."

Of course, the common answer to all these arguments about the vast cost of war was constantly made to Mr. Bright and his friends; and we find it met and exposed in his speeches. It was contended that, whilst the wars and the expenditure were absolutely necessary, the money spent was by no means wasted, but produced results sufficiently valuable to compensate the nation for its temporary sacrifices. Wars of aggression, or, more properly speaking, of just and spirited self-vindication on one or other of our

hundred frontiers, led in the natural course of things to an increase of territory, tribute, and trade, opening up new fields for taxation, or for the extension of our commerce. If the Peace Party referred to special instances, and sought to show that these results were by no means always attained, and that on the other hand there was invariably a decrease of trade during the war, if not for a long time afterwards, they were charged with obtuseness, or paradoxical crotchets, or sophistry, and always, as a matter of course, with lack of patriotism.

Mr. Bright constantly paid the penalty in this way for his shrewd sense and great moral courage. He never hesitated to expose the fallacies of the war party, and he was attacked for doing so in most of the public newspapers, in the House of Commons, and on the platform. But with men of sense and candour, such exposures, based on unquestionable facts, and on the most reasonable deductions, could not fail to carry weight. In the same Birmingham speech already mentioned, one of the first in which he had addressed his new constituents since his election by them in 1858, after briefly reviewing the military annals of the country, and speaking of the waste of English lives and treasure in every country, almost every province of the world, he admitted that there might be some of his hearers, as there were certainly many in the country at large, who held the "superstitious traditionary belief" that, somehow or other, our vast trade was to be attributed to what we had done in this way—that we had opened markets and advanced commerce, that English greatness depended upon the extent of English conquests and English military renown.

"But I (he said) am inclined to think that, with the exception of Australia, there is not a single dependency of the Crown which, if we come to reckon what it has cost in war and protection, would not be found to be a positive loss to the people of this country. Take the

United States, with which we have such an enormous and constantly increasing trade. The wise statesmen of the last generation, men whom your school histories tell you were statesmen serving under a monarch who, they tell you, was a patriotic monarch, spent about £130,000,000 of the fruits of the industry of the people in a vain—happily a vain—endeavour to retain the colonies of the United States in subjection to the Monarchy of England. Add up the interest of that £130,000,000 for all this time, and how long do you think it will be before there will be a profit on the trade with the United States which will repay the enormous sum we invested in a war to retain those States as colonies of this empire? It never will be paid off. Wherever you turn, you will find that the opening of markets, developing of new countries, introducing cotton cloth with cannon balls, are vain, foolish, and wretched excuses for wars, and ought not to be listened to for a moment by any man who understands the multiplication table, or who can do the simplest sum in arithmetic.

“Since the ‘Glorious Revolution,’ since the enthronisation of the great Norman territorial families, they have spent in wars, and we have worked for, about £2,000,000,000. The interest on that is £100,000,000 per annum, which alone, to say nothing of the principal sum, is three or four times as much as the whole amount of your annual export trade from that time to this. Therefore, if war has provided you with a trade, it has been at an enormous cost; but I think it is by no means doubtful that your trade would have been no less in amount and no less profitable had peace and justice been inscribed on your flag instead of conquest and love of military renown. . . . Within the last seven years our public debt has greatly increased. Whatever be the increase of our population, of our machinery, of our industry, of our wealth, still our National Debt goes on increasing. Although we have not a foot more territory to conserve, or an enemy in the world who dreams of attacking us, we find that our annual military expenses during the last twenty years have risen from £12,000,000 to £22,000,000.

“Some people believe that it is a good thing to pay a great revenue to the State. Even so eminent a man as Lord John Russell is not without a delusion of this sort. Lord John Russell, as you have heard, while speaking of me in flattering and friendly terms, says he is unfortunately obliged to differ from me frequently; therefore, I suppose, there is no particular harm in my saying that I am sometimes obliged to differ from him. Some time ago he was a great star in the northern hemisphere, shining, not with unaccustomed, but with his usual brilliancy at Liverpool. He made a speech in which there was a great

deal to be admired, to a meeting composed, it was said, to a great extent of working-men; and in it he stimulated them to a feeling of pride in the greatness of their country, and in being citizens of a State which enjoyed a revenue of £100,000,000 a-year, which included the revenues of the United Kingdom and of British India. But I think it would have been far more to the purpose if he could have congratulated the working-men of Liverpool on this vast empire being conducted in an orderly manner, on its laws being well administered and well obeyed, its shores sufficiently defended, its people prosperous and happy, on a revenue of £20,000,000. The State indeed, of which Lord John Russell is a part, may enjoy a revenue of £100,000,000, but I am afraid the working-men can only be said to enjoy it in the sense in which men not very choice in their expressions say that for a long time they have enjoyed 'very bad health.'

"I am prepared to admit that it is a subject of congratulation that there is a people so great, so free, and so industrious, that it can produce a sufficient income out of which £100,000,000 a-year, if need absolutely were, could be spared for some great and noble object; but it is not a thing to be proud of that our Government should require us to pay that enormous sum for the simple purposes of government and defence. Nothing can by any possibility tend more to the corruption of a Government than enormous revenues. We have heard lately of instances of certain joint-stock institutions with very great capital collapsing suddenly, bringing disgrace upon their managers, and ruin upon hundreds of families. A great deal of that has arisen, not so much from intentional fraud as from the fact that weak and incapable men have found themselves tumbling about in an ocean of bank-notes and gold, and they appear to have lost all sight of where it came from, to whom it belonged, and whether it was possible by any mal-administration ever to come to an end of it."

This, of course, was rank heresy. Mr. Bright not only questioned the usefulness of war in bringing fresh trade to the country—the favourite fallacy of the warlike school of politicians—but he even threw doubts upon the respectability of a vast national revenue. He would not admit the glory of a National Debt of seven or eight hundred millions, and of an annual taxation of a hundred millions. He went still further, and foretold "some dreadful catastrophe" as the inevitable consequences of the perpetuation of a policy

of conquest and military triumph. His views were so diametrically opposed to the prevailing views of the day, at any rate in official circles and amongst the higher ranks of society, that we cannot wonder at the odium which he brought on himself.

Nevertheless, as already said, Mr. Bright had the gift of persuasiveness for those who listened to him with open and candid minds. He was not subtle; he did not seek arguments and illustrations in remote fields, whither his hearers could not follow him; and he had the inestimable advantage of being able to rely upon the most simple inferences from the most patent facts. It is under such conditions that men like him found schools and gain acceptance for new doctrines. The condemnation of the "war policy" was logically complete before Mr. Bright was adopted into the rank of statesmen; and the policy of peace, with all that the term implies, had received its sanction and confirmation from the most thoughtful classes of Englishmen, whilst its first exponents and apostles were still kept beyond the pale of office by the exclusive Whigs.





CHAPTER XIV.

INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION.

THE advocates of a peace policy, as opposed to a policy of military supremacy, were not without a definite plan which they suggested as an alternative to the "meddling" action of English Governments in the past. The school headed by Cobden and Bright, which was contemptuously described by its opponents as the "peace-at-any-price party," was, as we have seen, an outcome of the Free Trade party, and included amongst its more prominent members the disciples of the same two leaders, the "Manchester School" with few exceptions, the Society of Friends almost to a man, and the general body of the Economists. It was a powerful combination, full of promise and of hope, in which individual members frequently differed from each other on points of detail, but who all agreed in accepting the main definitions and axioms of the party. The axioms were those which had served Cobden in good stead during his agitation against the Corn Laws, which had prevailed against all the influence of the monopolists, and which the Manchester League had conclusively shown to be based on the necessary laws of human society.

Absolutely free intercourse between nations, as between

the individuals of a nation, in all matters relating to the production and interchange of wealth—this, in general terms, was the end for which the Free Traders had striven, and the groundwork on which the new commercial edifice had been raised. It was but a step to carry the idea of free commerce, and of international co-operation in the interests of free commerce, into the domain of imperial policy. Cobden and Bright had no difficulty in applying the principles which their enemies had stigmatised as factory statesmanship and trade selfishness to the solution of questions relating to peace and war; for it was manifest that no two nations could concert measures for the development of their several industries unless they were prepared to enter on a course of settled and unequivocal peace. International goodwill founded on common interests and aspirations, and nursed by the mutual beneficence of the peoples rather than by the astute contrivance of the Governments—this was the talisman which the advocates of peace wished to apply to the settlement of questions hitherto complicated by tortuous diplomacy and ultimate appeals to the sword.

It was transparently the right policy, and the one which would most certainly advance the welfare of mankind. The breaking down of every possible barrier between the peoples (and war was the greatest barrier of all) would result in a triumph for trade which the lovers of military renown and supremacy were exceedingly loath to bring about; whilst on the other hand it would render the outbreak of hostility between two countries linked together by commercial treaties a rare and improbable contingency—improbable in direct proportion as the intercourse of merchants and consumers was free from vexatious restriction. The benign influence of trade, beginning by smoothing away the difficulties created by the “meddling” policy of the past—as Mr. Bright was wont to call it—would do more than anything else to prevent the occurrence of similar

difficulties in future ; and thus peace would be first established, then practically guaranteed, by the same causes which filled the pockets of the industrial community. The contrast between a policy of war and a policy of peace would then be distinctly marked ; for whereas under the former policy the nation was doubly impoverished, by the interruption of commerce and the enormous military expenditure, under the latter policy it would be doubly enriched, gaining by increased trade and by the disappearance of the war budgets.

An admirable illustration of these truths was afforded in the closing years of Cobden's life, and immediately after the period in which he and Mr. Bright had forfeited their popularity and their seats in Parliament by publicly protesting against the Crimean War. The tendency to braggadocio encouraged by Lord Palmerston in England and the Emperor Napoleon in France had thriven by what it had been fed upon ; and now the strange spectacle was afforded of the two nations which had combined against Russia growing jealous of each other, and even threatening each other with war, for no better reason than that each deemed the other to be nursing a grudge against it. In 1856, Englishmen and Frenchmen had entered Sebastopol together ; in 1858 the same men were eager to come to blows. This alone would have been an excellent theme for any one who wished to urge the demoralising influences of an unjust war ; and Mr. Bright took it, with all the surrounding circumstances, as the subject of more than one public speech and letter. He dwelt on the utterly inadequate reasons given for the ill-feeling between the two countries, on the foolishness of the English delusion as to the evil intentions of France, on the greatness of the calamity which was menaced by these groundless misunderstandings. As we saw in a previous chapter, he made one notable speech in the House of Commons, in regard to the possibility of bringing this

madness to an end by an international commercial agreement, which had an immediate effect upon French statesmen, and which directly led up to the Treaty negotiated by Cobden six months later.

The result of this Commercial Treaty was precisely such as Mr. Bright, in common with all the Free Traders and the Peace Party, had anticipated. It brought the two peoples together for purposes of mutual advantage, giving to France thirty millions of new customers, and to England a still greater number, and it allayed the irritation which had been growing more and more intense for several years. The lesson was invaluable and highly instructive; it proved to all who could read it the absolute truth of the prediction that freedom of commerce would be found to be the best possible ally of peace. From this point of view, no grander triumph was ever won by the apostle of the international doctrines.

It is needless to say that vast sums had been wasted in armaments by both countries during the continuance of the panic, and that millions were in all probability saved by the establishment of closer relations between England and France. Mr. Bright made much of the financial argument, which could not fail to produce an impression even on the official mind. Economy was all but abolished in the system of government favoured by Lord Palmerston; but the member for Birmingham could never for a moment forget the important issues involved in the question. As he said on one occasion, the multiplication of armaments year after year, and utterly regardless of cost, could not endure; it must break down of its own weight. "Its costliness, its destructiveness, its savagery will break it down; and it remains but for some Government—I pray that it may be ours!—to set the great example to Europe of proposing a mutual reduction of armaments. Our policy in past times . . . has been one of perpetual meddling, with perpetually

no result except that which is evil. We have maintained great armaments, not, I sincerely believe, because we wanted to conquer or to annex any territory in Europe, but in order that whenever anything happens in Europe we may negotiate, intervene, advise, do something or other becoming what is called the dignity of this great country."

This recommendation of a general disarmament attracted some little attention at the time, and the idea was discussed in the leading newspapers of more than one country. To a limited extent the idea was acted upon; and if it had not been for the restlessness of France, and the ambitions of Prussia, a long and "unarmed peace" might have been inaugurated in Europe. It would be difficult to say how many of the subsequent troubles and disasters of the European community might have been avoided if Mr. Bright's aspirations in 1859 had been fulfilled, and if the disarmament could have taken place.

The notion of disarmament was manifestly near akin to the notion of international arbitration—the one being a proposal to remove beforehand a dangerous incentive to warlike enterprises, and the other a proposal to remove or neutralise a cause of quarrel after it had passed into the serious stage. Both methods depend for their application upon the goodwill and common sense of the leading European nations; and it may be doubted whether the second is not quite as simple and practicable as the other. Disarmament would not be easy to carry out, either in the arrangement of details or in actual operation. Arbitration, on the other hand, would be admissible, as a rule, only when a general provision had been made for it beforehand; and the idea, rightly interpreted, should not be a hard one to carry out in theory, if boldly accepted by any one of the Great Powers to begin with. But it is certain that it was much scouted by men of official and traditional views when any of the Peace Party ventured to recommend it.

Mr. Bright had courageously advocated the establishment of a system of arbitration some years before he made the speech in which he pleaded for a general disarmament. He did so, rather as a matter of theory than with regard to any particular international quarrel, in the month of January 1853, at a public meeting at Manchester, where he had been charged with the following resolution:—"That as an appeal to the sword can settle no question on any principle of equity and right, it is the duty of Governments to enter into treaties on behalf of the nations they respectively represent, binding the parties to refer to the decision of competent and impartial arbitrators such differences arising between them as cannot be amicably adjusted, and to abide such decision."

Now, as Mr. Bright argued, this is a resolution to which nearly every one would assent in the abstract. Arbitration is a very good thing, if you can only have it; but some of the most powerful opponents of the scheme are men who agree with the theory whilst they will not lift a hand to make it more practicable. No elaborate reasoning is required to show that the result of an international quarrel has no kind of reference whatever to the origin of the war, or to the justice of the matter which was originally in dispute.

"I suspect (said Mr. Bright) that if any man versed in the history of this country, or of any country, were to investigate the causes out of which various contests have sprung,—if he were minutely to detail those causes, as accurately as it could be done, from the negotiations and despatches which passed between governments before those wars broke out—and then if he were to bring before the reader those things which were settled, in some shape, at the conclusion of the war,—he would find almost invariably that there was no kind of relation whatever between the beginning and the ending of this most melancholy business.

The fact is, that the decision is with the strong; and the strong, unfortunately, have too often little regard for justice. Commanders, officers, and men may go to prayers before the battle; but we have no authority whatever for believing that with regard to the battles of modern times, and of modern nations, there is any particular interference of Providence on behalf of what is just and right. We generally find the result to depend upon the magnitude of the forces, the discipline of the men, and the skill and the sagacity of the commanders. Now, when we use the word 'arbitration,' we are taking a term which is applied to the existing system. We often hear 'the arbitrament of the sword' spoken of; but it appears to me that the arbitration we *now* have is of the clumsiest and most unsatisfactory sort. *Our* arbitrators amount, I think, by a paper which has been laid before the conference, to something over two hundred thousand men—a most unsatisfactory number to decide upon the justice of any question. But this system of arbitration requires also extensive dockyards; ships to the number of five or six hundred, bristling with cannon; gunpowder by tons absolutely unknown and innumerable; expenditure more enormous than any nation has ever before expended purely upon those objects; ignorance spread throughout the country, and pauperism produced by the abstraction and destruction of capital; crime induced upon all hands by the prevalence of pauperism and ignorance; and in the actual operation of this system of arbitration we have terror and death spread over whole regions, and inflicted upon thousands, and it may be millions of our fellow-creatures."

Moreover, this arbitration of the sword cost us something like sixteen millions sterling every year; so that, altogether, it was the most absurd and unreasonable way of deciding a quarrel which could be imagined. This being generally admitted, the real question to be considered was whether

anything could be done to make the change from the arbitrament of the sword to peaceful arbitration appear more practicable. Greater changes had been effected already, which had at one time been regarded as impossible. There was the parallel case of duelling, once deemed "indispensable for the settlement of private quarrels, and to cause a gentleman to be gentlemanly in his conduct to another gentleman, as wars are now believed to be indispensable between communities and nations." Duelling had been covered with ridicule, and was no longer considered necessary, or even respectable. Was it not possible to form a public opinion of a similar kind in respect of war?

A recent case had happened in connection with the Lobos islands in the Pacific, which were claimed by Peru, and also by the United States Government; and Mr. Webster, the American Secretary of State, had ordered a fleet to proceed to the spot, with a view to seizing the islands. But there was a treaty between these two countries, one clause of which provided for arbitration in the event of any dispute arising between them; and the consequence was that the Government of Washington recalled the fleet, and the right of the Peruvians to the islands in question was quietly recognised by the stronger Power. This was a good instance of the authority of a moral agreement in overriding physical force, and preventing an act of violence by the mere fact of its having been formulated years before.

Another telling argument was drawn by the speaker from the last fisheries dispute between the United States and Canada. As soon as this dispute had arisen, people in England wanted to know "how many ships were going," and in America "a squadron that was ordered to Japan was countermanded, and the ships were to go to that part of the ocean where those fisheries were principally carried on." But if we had had a clause in a treaty with the United States providing for arbitration, there would have been no

talk of sending ships of war. The treaty clause would have been printed in every newspaper, and the discussion would have been confined to the question of arbitrators. Where should we find the men to judge between ourselves and the States?

“I must say for myself (said Mr. Bright) that I believe there are men in the United States to whom alone—as I believe there are men in this country to whom alone—both countries might commit the decision upon a question affecting both countries; and I believe it would be decided according to that which was just to both of them. And there are other countries—Russians, French, Prussians, Germans—in fact you have all the world to choose from: you have all your great judges and great jurists, your excellent men of every class in every country; and from these every nation, having such an arrangement as this, might choose the men of foremost mark in the world, who for intellect and for moral qualities are unsurpassed, and who would stake their whole character with their countrymen, and with all posterity, that they give a just decision on the matter referred to them. Well, but if this be true of the United States, is it less true of France? Now, I want to know why it is that no proposition can be made from our Government—not in an underground, subterranean, intriguing manner of carrying on business with a great country like France, but some above-board and open proposition which shall give confidence to the people of both countries. That which I am satisfied the people of both countries require, is that which the Governments of both countries ought, if possible, to obtain; and it only wants a beginning. We pretend to lead the world in some things. But if we, here on this island, with a mercantile navy surpassing that of almost all the world,—if we have a people pugnacious beyond all former example; if we have an industry so productive that the thousands of millions which have been spent in former wars have not yet pauperised and exhausted us; if we have glory recorded on our pages of history, so that the most gluttonous amongst us ought to be satisfied, and ask no more; and if, besides that, we have liberal institutions which give to the people of this country that measure of contentment that gives security to the Government,—then, I say, are we not in a position, before all the other nations, of offering to the nations of Europe, and to the United States, a new policy, a policy which, though it differs as much as white from black from the policy of past times, yet shall be one that in the future shall give greater security to Governments, and greater happiness and

contentment to peoples, and shall promote the advance and progress of all that is good in the world, infinitely beyond anything that can ever be hoped for from the most glorious and bloody conflicts of armed men?"

This advice was surely explicit enough ; and no one could complain that Mr. Bright shirked the duty of proposing an alternative scheme to war for the settlement of casual disputes between nations. The "new policy" of the Peace Party—which is indeed the policy of no party in particular, but of all rational men who have the courage and confidence to believe that the world is ready for the change—is clearly defined in the passage just quoted, which seeks to lay the foundation of a foreign policy infinitely grander, and more suited for a community of civilised States, than that which had embroiled the nations of the world for so many centuries, which had wasted so many lives, and sacrificed so many millions of pounds.

There can be little doubt that Mr. Bright's eloquent address at the Manchester meeting did much to promote the cause of international arbitration, and to prepare the way for its acceptance by public opinion, particularly in this country and in America. It is not too much to say that, as the speech of 1859 brought about the Commercial Treaty between France and England, so the speech of 1853, and the subsequent labours of the Peace Party in England and the United States, led up to the adoption of arbitration in several important instances, and notably in certain disputes which arose between England and the United States ten years later.

It may, however, be observed that the question of arbitration was not so new in other countries as it was in England when Mr. Bright publicly drew attention to it. Of course the chief authorities on international law deal more or less precisely with it, and many of the most eminent statesmen in various countries admitted the reference of disputes to

arbitrators, in all matters not directly affecting the safety of a nation, to be preferable to a resort to arms. Early in the history of the United States the doctrine had been industriously preached; and the establishment of the American Peace Society in 1828 marks the stage at which the propaganda had then arrived.

There was a Peace Society in London in 1816, which, if it found less encouragement amongst statesmen than the parallel movement in America, was yet strong enough to stir up and maintain a fruitful discussion. Continental nations followed suit. A Peace Congress was held at Brussels in 1848, which urged on the Governments of Europe and America "the necessity of introducing into all international treaties an arbitration clause, by which war shall be avoided in the settlement of disputes."

In 1849—four years before Mr. Bright's speech on the subject at Manchester—Cobden had raised a debate on arbitration in the House of Commons, moving for an Address to the Queen, praying her to direct her principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to invite the Governments "to concur in treaties binding the respective parties, in the event of any future misunderstanding which cannot be arranged by amicable negotiation, to refer the matter in dispute to the decision of arbitrators." Cobden did not recommend arbitration by Governments, or by crowned heads. "I do not," he said, "confine myself to the plan of referring disputes to neutral Powers. I see the difficulty of two independent States like England and France doing so, as one might prefer a Republic for an arbitrator, and the other a Monarchy. I should prefer to see these disputes referred to individuals, whether designated commissioners or plenipotentiaries, or arbitrators appointed from one country to meet men appointed from another country, to inquire into the matter and decide upon it; or, if they cannot do so, to have the power of calling in an umpire, as is done in all

arbitrations. I propose that these individuals should have absolute power to dispose of the questions submitted to them."

Lord Palmerston, who then presided at the Foreign Office, took a course which was natural under the circumstances. He assented in principle to many of the suggestions of the opener of the debate, but he had no confidence in the practicability of the scheme. "I do not quarrel," he said, "with the principle upon which the proposition is founded; but I think its practical effect would be dangerous to this country, and that its practical adoption by other countries would be impossible. Indeed, I believe that no country would agree to such a proposal. No country would consent blindfold to submit its interests and rights on all future occasions to the decision of any third party, whether public or private, whether governments or men of science; and I think, therefore, the proposition is one which would be attended with no possible result as regards foreign countries."

Cobden was not satisfied with the declarations of Ministers, and insisted on a division; but he only secured 79 votes against 176. He might have argued, as Mr. Bright argued a little later, that to dwell on the difficulties of the case was not the best way to remove them, and that the initiation of a great Power such as England would be one of the most likely modes of overcoming the reluctance and timidity of other nations.

An important step in the progress of this movement was taken at the Congress of Paris in 1856, when a clause was adopted in the Treaty to the following effect:—"The plenipotentiaries do not hesitate to express, in the name of their Governments, the wish that States between which any serious misunderstanding may arise should, before appealing to arms, have recourse, as far as circumstances might allow, to the good offices of a friendly Power."

The credit of proposing this clause belongs to Lord

Clarendon, and it was received by the other plenipotentiaries as thoroughly in accordance with the tendency of the age. "The good offices of a friendly Power," however, may mean a very different thing from arbitration. Fourteen years later England proffered her good offices between France and Germany, which were somewhat coldly received, and politely declined; whereas, if there had been due stipulations for arbitration previously and repeatedly agreed upon by the two parties, it is quite conceivable, even in this critical case, and with the deep-seated causes of jealousy which existed between France and Germany, that the petty issues arising out of the Hohenzollern candidature in Spain might have been submitted to an arbitrator, and decided without the disastrous consequence which followed.

The history of the arbitration in the "Alabama" case is highly interesting and instructive. The original suggestion of this mode of settling the dispute came from the United States in 1863, but England did not assent to the arbitration until 1871. During the interval of eight years the question had been discussed from every point of view, and the English Government had obstinately declined to submit its case to the judgment of a third party. The English press, however, was more reasonable than the successive Ministers who had been called upon to deal with the matter, so that in process of time the Liberal papers came to admit the reasonableness of the American claims, at any rate so far as they demanded the submission of the case to arbitration.

Lord John Russell had thus expressed the objections of the English Government, in a letter to Mr. Adams in 1863:—

"In your letter of October 23, 1863, you were pleased to say that the Government of the United States is ready to agree to any form of arbitration. Her Majesty's Government have thus been led to consider what question could be put to any Sovereign or State to whom

this very great power should be assigned. It appears to Her Majesty's Government that there are but two questions by which the claim of compensation could be tested. The one is—Have the British Government acted with due diligence, or, in other words, with good faith and honesty, in the maintenance of the neutrality they proclaimed? The other is—Have the law officers of the crown properly understood the Foreign Enlistment Act, when they declined, in June 1862, to advise the detention and seizure of the 'Alabama,' and on other occasions, when they were asked to detain other ships building or fitting in British ports? It appears to Her Majesty's Government that neither of these questions could be put to a foreign Government with any regard to the dignity and character of the British crown and the British nation. Her Majesty's Government are sole guardians of their own honour. They cannot admit that they have acted with bad faith in maintaining the neutrality they professed. The law officers of the crown must be held to be better interpreters of a British statute than any foreign Government can be presumed to be."

The Derby-Disraeli Administration, during its short tenure of office in 1866-7, observed the same course as its predecessor had done; and in 1868 Mr. Gladstone's Government began in the same spirit. But Mr. Bright was now for the first time a Minister, and his influence, with that of his friends who concurred with him in the matter, sufficed before long to make the Cabinet accept the offer of the United States.

These are events which belong to a later period in Mr. Bright's career, and we may reserve their consideration for a future chapter.





CHAPTER XV.

INDIA AND IRELAND.

WE have touched upon the principal questions which engaged Mr. Bright's attention during the earlier stages of his Parliamentary career—first as member for Durham (1843-7), and then as member for Manchester (1847-57). Before passing on to trace his subsequent career as member for Birmingham, we may gather up one or two omitted facts in his personal history which deserve to be mentioned.

If John Bright had been simply an advocate of Free Trade and a member of the Peace Party, confining himself to the emancipation of trade and the application of humane and religious ideas to political questions, he would still have played a prominent part in the public life of his country, but he might never have earned the name of statesman. One of the main characteristics, however, which distinguish him from many of his fellows in these two respects is the statesmanlike breadth of his mind, which caused him to take an interest in all that concerned his country, and not only to take an interest, but to understand, to discuss, and to assist in the solution of the most critical problems of the age.

Amongst these problems was that of the government of India—a question whereof the importance had never been overlooked by statesmen of judgment and prudence in England, but which was nevertheless too frequently neglected by the politicians of the day. Struck by the unsatisfactory account which had been given of the country by men personally acquainted with its condition and needs, Mr. Bright moved, a few years after his admission to the House, for a Committee to proceed to India, for the purpose of inquiring into the truth of these allegations. The Committee was at first refused, though no attempt was made to deny the necessity of reform. Our great dependency in the East was governed in part by the East India Company, from its offices in Leadenhall Street, and partly by a Board of Control, established by Parliament to guide and check the Court of Directors. The double rule had not turned out well; there was confusion and divided authority; and the financial condition of India was extremely precarious. All this was admitted, but Mr. Bright was obliged to be satisfied with an assurance that Government had the matter under their consideration. Lord John Russell was Premier at that time, and Sir John Cam Hobhouse President of the Board of Control, and they agreed that a Committee was not required. Subsequently, however, Lord John Russell saw fit to change his opinion, and a Committee was appointed. It did not report strongly in favour of reform, and the subject was allowed to sleep for some time longer.

Sir Charles Wood, afterwards Lord Halifax, who presided at the Board of Control in the Ministry of the Earl of Aberdeen, and of his successor Lord Palmerston, brought in a Bill in the summer of 1853 to amend the existing Act, and to improve the relations between the Board of Control and the Directors. This Bill—on which Mr. Bright spoke in the House of Commons—reduced the number of Directors from twenty-four to eighteen, and provided that six of the

latter should be nominated by the Crown from Indian Civil Servants of more than ten years' standing. Other provisions were made, tending to restrict the privileges of the Company—and proportionately to increase the responsibility of the Crown; but the scheme was regarded as very inadequate by men who, like Mr. Bright, had been convinced of the necessity for a sweeping change. It was evident that the few modifications suggested in Sir Charles Wood's Bill would be insufficient to place the government of India on a much better footing.

It is easy to divine the principles dwelt upon by Mr. Bright and his friends. They were principles far in advance of the official ideas of that day, though they have been for the most part adopted in our own generation. The throwing open of the Service to free competition, the wider employment of the most able men of the native population, the consolidation of the home government, the remodelling of the finances and the internal development of the country—these are the points for which Mr. Bright pleaded in 1853, and which were thought to be unattainable and Utopian.

Mr. Bright's speech on this occasion was remarkably well-informed, and was as exact in particulars as it was wide in its scope and application. It did much to raise the speaker's repute in the House, not only as an orator but as an able and conscientious politician, who could master a subject bristling with difficulties, and could grasp in its entirety a question involving a thousand complications. The fact was that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had taken a special interest in the condition and development of India; and it was as a representative of Manchester that Mr. Bright had studied and mastered the problem.

The chief complaint of the more thoroughgoing reformers against the Government was that so little had been done to open up the country, whilst so much had been drawn from

it in the way of taxation. The Reformed Parliament of 1832 had appointed a Law Commission, to consider the general question of the administration of justice in India, but the report of this Commission, as Mr. Bright said, had ever since "been going backwards and forwards, like an unsettled spirit," between the mother country and the dependency. One of the witnesses before the recent Committee had said that the Court of Directors "actually sneered at the propositions of their officers for enactments of any kind, and that it was evidently their object to gradually extinguish the Commission altogether."

The neglect of public works had been as serious as the neglect of law. Colonel Sykes, another witness, had stated the amazing fact that, during fifteen years, from 1838 to 1852, the average expenditure throughout the whole of India on public works, including roads, bridges, tanks, and canals, was no more than £299,732. "The north-west appeared to be the pet district; and in 1851 the total expenditure was £334,000, of which the north-west district had £240,000. In 1852 the estimate was £693,000, of which the north-west district was to have £492,000, leaving only £94,000 in 1851, and £201,000 in 1852, for public works of all kinds in the three Presidencies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, with a population of 70,000,000 souls."

As a test of the efforts of Englishmen to develop India, Mr. Bright mentioned the comparative rarity with which individual traders or private persons settled down in the country. The reason was that there did not exist the same security for investments as in almost every other country in the world. In the interior of India an Englishman was scarcely to be met with, unless it was in the character of a tax-collector. Throughout the whole dependency, containing more than a hundred millions of people, there were barely ten thousand British-born subjects not in

the service of the Queen or the Company. "I cannot believe," Mr. Bright added, "but that, if the United States had been the possessors of India, where there are tens of Europeans now in that country there would have been, not hundreds, but thousands of the people of America. The right hon. gentleman spoke of the exports to India, and wanted to show how large they were. Certainly they have increased very much, because they started from nothing at all. Before the opening of the trade, the Court of Proprietors, by resolution, declared that it was quite a delusion to suppose it possible to increase the trade with India. In 1850 the total exports to India from Great Britain and Ireland were £8,024,000, of which cotton goods alone amounted to £5,220,000, leaving £2,804,000 for the total exports from Great Britain and Ireland upon all other branches of industry other than cotton. . . . Our exports to India in 1814 were £826,000; in 1832 they were £3,600,000; in 1843 they were £6,500,000; and in 1850 they were £8,000,000. India consumes our exports at the rate of 1s. 3d. per head; whilst in South America, including the whole of the slave population, the consumption per head is 8s. 8d. These are facts which the right hon. baronet is bound to pay serious attention to. For myself, representing, as I do, one of our great seats of manufacturing industry, I feel myself doubly called upon to lose no opportunity of bringing such facts before the House, satisfied as I am that there is no member of this House so obtuse as not to comprehend how materially the great manufacturing interests of this country are concerned in the question—What shall be the future government of India?"

The speaker passed an emphatic condemnation on the financial mismanagement of India under the Company's rule. He showed from their own statements—from statements made by a former Director in defence of his colleagues—that in the course of sixteen years, between 1835 and

1851, the net taxation of India had produced £340,756,000; the expenditure on the government in the same period having been £341,676,000. During the same sixteen years there had been expended on public works of all kinds £5,000,000, and there had been paid, in dividends, to the proprietors of East India stock, £10,080,000; making a total expenditure of £356,756,000. In the same period the Company had contracted loans to the extent of £16,000,000.

The closing sentences of this thoroughly statesmanlike speech have more than once been remarked upon for their fervid eloquence; and they will serve to show how Mr. Bright could deal with a subject which he had taken up in the first instance as a purely commercial matter, and at the request of a Chamber of Commerce. He urged the abolition of the old Court of Directors, and the assumption of the government of India by the Home Administration. It was, he said, no question of Manchester against Essex, of town against country, of Church against Nonconformity.

“It is a question in which we all have an interest, and in which our children may be more deeply interested than we are ourselves. Should anything go wrong with the finances, we must bear the burden; or should the people of India by our treatment be goaded into insurrection, we must reconquer the country, or be ignominiously driven out of it. I will not be a party to a state of things which might lead to the writing of a narrative like this on the history of our relations with that empire. Let the House utterly disregard the predictions of mischief likely to result from such a change in the Government of India as that which I advocate. When the trade was thrown open, and the Company was deprived of the monopoly of carrying, they said the Chinese would poison the tea. There is nothing too outrageous or ridiculous for the Company to say in order to prevent the Legislature from placing affairs on a more honest footing. I object to the Bill, because—as the right hon. gentleman admitted—it maintains a double Government. In the unstatesmanlike course which the right hon. gentleman is pursuing, he will no doubt be especially backed by the noble lord the member for London. I only wish that some of the younger blood in the Cabinet might have had their way upon this question. Nothing can induce me to believe, after the evidence which is before the public, that this

measure has the approbation of an united Cabinet. It is not possible that thirteen sensible gentlemen, who have any pretensions to form a Cabinet, could agree to a measure of this nature. I am more anxious than I can express that Parliament should legislate rightly in this matter. Let us act so at this juncture that it may be said of us hereafter—that whatever crimes England originally committed in conquering India, she at least made the best of her position by governing the country as wisely as possible, and left the records and traces of a humane and liberal sway.

“I recollect having heard the noble lord the member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston) deliver in this House one of the best speeches I ever listened to. On that occasion the noble lord gloried in the proud name of England, and pointing to the security with which an Englishman might travel abroad, he triumphed in the idea that his countrymen might exclaim, in the spirit of the ancient Roman, *Civis Romanus sum*. Let us not resemble the Romans merely in our national privileges and personal security. The Romans were great conquerors, but where they conquered they governed wisely. The nations they conquered were impressed so indelibly with the intellectual character of their masters that, after fourteen centuries of decadence, the traces of civilisation are still distinguishable. Why should not we act a similar part in India? There never was a more docile people, never a more tractable nation. The opportunity is present, and the power is not wanting. Let us abandon the policy of aggression, and confine ourselves to a territory ten times the size of France, with a population four times as numerous as that of the United Kingdom. Surely that is enough to satisfy the most gluttonous appetite for glory and supremacy. Educate the people of India, govern them wisely, and gradually the distinctions of caste will disappear, and they will look upon us rather as benefactors than as conquerors. And if we desire to see Christianity in some form professed in that country, we shall sooner attain our object by setting the example of a high-toned Christian morality than by any other means we can employ.”

Something more powerful, more logical and persuasive even than these words of Mr. Bright was needed before English statesmen could be brought to take the administration of India effectively in hand. The disastrous rebellion of 1857 taught England as bitter a lesson as imperial Rome was ever taught by one of her foreign dependencies; and then Bill followed Bill with significant haste, and the

Crown once for all undertook the duty of governing the greatest empire ever possessed by a civilised and commercial nation.

On several occasions, before he had fully gained the ear of the House, Mr. Bright dealt with Irish questions in the same spirit of large and comprehensive interest—taking, as a rule, the popular side, even when compelled to abide by the policy of repression and coercion. One of his first speeches in Parliament was made in the session of 1845, when he opposed Sir Robert Peel's Maynooth grant on the ground that it was an application of public money "for the purpose of maintaining an institution purely ecclesiastical, and for the rearing and educating of the priests of a particular sect." He did not believe that the peculiar nature of the Established Church in Ireland, and the consequent injustice to the Catholic majority, warranted a departure from a principle which seemed to him to be paramount to all other considerations. On few subjects were his opinions more unalterably fixed than on the question of religious equality, which he held to be violated by the grant of a sum from the public taxes in support of a religious denomination. The fervour of his personal faith, and perhaps in some degree the prejudice of his individual or sectional convictions, were strongly manifested in this speech; and he ended with a somewhat bitter contrast between the political conduct of Conformity and Nonconformity in the past. "When I look back," he said, "to the history of this country, and consider its present condition, I must say that all that the people possess of liberty has come, not through the portals of the cathedrals and the parish churches, but from the conventicles, which are despised by hon. gentlemen opposite. When I know that if a good measure is to be carried in this House, it must be by men who are sent hither by the Nonconformists of Great Britain; when I read and see that the past and present State alliance

with religion is hostile to religious liberty, preventing all growth and nearly destroying all vitality in religion itself, then I shall hold myself to have read, thought, and lived in vain if I vote for a measure which in the smallest degree shall give any further power or life to the principle of State endowment ; and, in conclusion, I will only exhort the Dissenters of England to act in the same way, and to stand upon their own great, pure, and unassailable principle ; for, if they stand by it manfully, and work for it vigorously, the time may come—nay, it will come—when that principle will be adopted by the Legislature of the country.”

On the subject of Irish government, and especially of the means adopted for the preservation of the peace in Ireland, Mr. Bright assumed an attitude of firmness from the beginning ; and his conduct in this respect was the more notable from the fact of his belonging to a religious body who conscientiously objected to the employment of force, and to anything like interference with the liberty of individuals. The fifth decade of the century was one of the most disturbed and troubled periods in the relations between England and the sister kingdom, and no popular representative could long hold a seat in Parliament without being called upon to choose his course and take his side.

In 1846 Sir Robert Peel had been driven from power, immediately after the passing of the Corn Importation Act, by a combination against his Irish Coercion Bill. But one of the first needs of the Government which succeeded him was to propose and carry legislation of a similar character. The year 1847 was distinguished by many outrages ; there was open rebellion in Ireland, and it became absolutely necessary for Lord John Russell to ask Parliament for increased powers. The Home Secretary brought in a Crime and Outrage Bill at the end of the year, which was carried almost unanimously ; and Mr. Bright, though he presented a petition against it from Manchester, signed by more than

twenty thousand persons, thought it his duty to vote with Ministers. Under all the circumstances he was unwilling to give a silent vote, and he therefore justified his conduct in a speech on the third reading.

Mr. Bright has been blamed for supporting the policy of coercion in Ireland, and has been accused of inconsistency because on other occasions he has set his face against legislation of a nearly identical kind. But, as he has contended, every such demand on the part of a Government must be considered on its merits. The justification of a suspension of the law has not been the same in all instances. In 1847, matters had been allowed to reach an extremity. The ordinary law was utterly without power and authority. In England the feeling of the people in favour of law and order was so strong that every man "was willing to become, and actually was, a peace officer;" but in Ireland it was not so. The sentiment of the people in certain districts was "depraved and thoroughly vitiated;" and in these circumstances the Government had a clear case for the demand which they made.

Nevertheless Mr. Bright carefully guarded himself against being thought to approve the rule of England in Ireland. He echoed the admission of the Premier that all parties alike were chargeable with misgovernment. That is an admission which has constantly been made by English statesmen; and it has been pertinent to say to every one of them, as Mr. Bright said to Lord John Russell, that he was now dictator on Irish questions, and whatever he proposed for that country would scarcely find a successful opposition in the House of Commons. At the same time, the speaker apportioned his blame very evenly between the Government and the Irish people themselves. He drew attention to the fact that, though of the 105 Irish members sixty or seventy were Liberals, and thirty Repealers, they had not laid on the table a single measure which they believed to be

necessary to the prosperity of their country. Further than this, Mr. Bright accused the Irish people of a want of industry; and his observations on this point have often been referred to in subsequent discussions of the question. The cause of Ireland's calamities, he said, was her idleness; and yet the idleness of the people was not wholly their fault. The great reason for it was that there was no trade in Ireland. There were few flourishing towns; there was a vast mass of people living on the land; and the land itself was "not half so useful for their employment and sustentation as it might be." Every year there was a large emigration, because in the country itself there was no reward for enterprise, and little possibility of living in comfort.

There was a wider question still—the condition of the landed estates, the poverty of a great number of landlords, and the relations between landlords and tenants. Mr. Bright faced this difficulty also, in a mood of the highest statesmanship, suggesting a remedy which was remarkably bold and apposite, considering the youth of the speaker and the comparative freshness of the subject in Parliament. He claimed that there was a unanimous admission that the ills of Ireland were connected with the management of the land.

"I have a theory that, in England as well as in Ireland, the proprietors of the soil are chiefly responsible for whatever bad legislation has been inflicted upon us. The ownership of land confers more political power than the possession of any other description of property. The Irish landowners have been willing parties to the past legislation for Ireland, and they have also had the administration and execution of the laws in that country. The encumbered condition of landed property in Ireland is at this moment the most pressing question. . . . Patchwork legislation will not now succeed; speeches from the Lord Lieutenant—articles in the newspapers—lending to the landowners at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

money raised by taxation from the traders of England, who have recently been paying 8 per cent.—all will fail to revive the industry of Ireland. I will now state what, in my opinion, is the remedy, and I beg to ask the attention of the Government to it, because, though they may now think it an extreme one, I am convinced that the time will come when they will be compelled to adopt it. In the first place, it is their duty to bring in a Sale of Estates Bill, and make it easy for landowners who wish to dispose of their estates to do so. They should bring in a Bill to simplify the titles to land in Ireland. I understand that it is almost impossible to transfer an estate now, the difficulties in the way of a clear title being almost insurmountable. In the next place, they should diminish temporarily, if not permanently, all stamp duties which hinder the transfer of landed property, and they should pass a law by which the system of entailment should for the future be prevented. (Laughter.) I can assure hon. gentlemen who laugh at this, that at some not distant day this must be done, and not in Ireland only, but in England also. It is an absurd and monstrous system, for it binds, as it were, the living under the power of the dead. The principle on which the law should proceed is this, that the owner of property should be permitted to leave it to whomsoever he will, provided the individual is living when the will is made; but he should not be suffered, after he is dead and buried, and forgotten, to speak and still to direct the channel through which the estate should pass. I shall be told that the law of entail in Ireland is the same as in England, and that in Scotland it is even more strict. I admit it; but the evil is great in England, and in Scotland it has become intolerable, and must soon be relaxed, if not abolished. Perhaps I shall be told that the laws of entail and primogeniture are necessary for the maintenance of our aristocratic institutions; but if the evils of Ireland spring from this source, I say, perish your aristocratic institutions

rather than that a whole nation should be in this terrible condition. If your aristocratic families would rear up their children in habits of business, and with some notions of duty and prudence, these mischievous arrangements would not be required, and they would retain in their possession estates at least as large as is compatible with the interests of the rest of the community. If the laws of entail and primogeniture are sound and just, why not apply them to personal property as well as to freehold? Imagine them in force in the middle classes of the community, and it will be seen at once that the unnatural system, if universal, would produce confusion; and confusion would necessitate its total abolition. I am thoroughly convinced that everything the Government or Parliament can do for Ireland will be unavailing, unless the foundation of the work be laid well and deep, by clearing away the fetters under which land is now held, so that it may become the possession of real owners, and be made instrumental to the employment and sustentation of the people. . . . If Government will manfully and courageously grapple with the great question of the condition of land in Ireland, they will, I am convinced, be supported by a majority of the members of this House, they will enable the strength and skill of Irishmen to be expended on their own soil, and lay the foundation of her certain prosperity by giving that stimulus and reward to industry which it cannot have in the present circumstances of that country. Sir, I feel it impossible to refuse my vote in favour of the Bill now before us; but I am compelled to say that unless the Government will zealously promote measures in the direction I have indicated, they cannot hope long to retain the confidence of this House or of the country."

Three-and-thirty years were to pass before such principles as these were to be applied to the remedy of Irish grievances, and before this practical advice was to be acted upon; and then John Bright himself was to be a prominent member of

the Cabinet by which the work was undertaken. The Radicalism at which the House of Commons laughed in 1847 was to be the adopted policy of the Whigs in 1881.

This "theory" of Mr. Bright's in respect of the land was steadily maintained and frequently propounded by him from that time forward, until at length it became the theory of the great majority of the Liberal party. We find it recurring in many subsequent speeches on Irish affairs—in 1848, on the subject of poverty in Ireland; in 1849, on a proposal for a grant of £50,000 in aid of the distressed districts; and constantly in later years. During the great famine which culminated in 1848 and 1849, Mr. Bright was a member of a Select Committee appointed to examine the condition of the Irish poor, and it was in accordance with a recommendation of this committee that the "rate in aid" of 1849 was proposed and carried.

Side by side with the land was the question of the Irish Church; and on this topic also Mr. Bright was pronounced and energetic. There could of course, for a man like him, be no two opinions as to what ought to be done with the Irish Church. He had expressed his conviction, as early as 1845, that the Protestant Establishment in Ireland was "at the root of the evils in that country;" and he made his indictment under this head almost as strong as his indictment in respect of the system of land tenure. Ireland, he said, in the speech of 1848, had long been "a country of jars and turmoil," and these jars were due in the main to religious dissension. The country had been governed in a manner unknown in England and Scotland. "If Ireland has been rightly governed—if it has been wise and just to maintain the Protestant Church established there, you ought, in order to carry out your system, to establish Prelacy in Scotland, and Catholicism in England; though, if you were to attempt to do either the one or the other, it would not be a sham but a real insurrection that you would

provoke. There must be equality between the great religious sects in Ireland—between Catholic and Protestant. It is impossible that this equality can be much longer denied.”

There were, however, still twenty years of vitality in the Irish Church ; and Mr. Bright’s campaign against her was by no means at an end. He was to speak as an outsider and a volunteer, many years before he accepted Mr. Gladstone’s invitation to enter his Government, and to assist in elaborating a scheme for the disestablishment of the Protestant Church.





CHAPTER XVI.

MANCHESTER TO BIRMINGHAM.

THE end of the Crimean War brought a short lull in English politics, during which all parties were looking forward to the future with more or less uncertainty and impatience. The reaction from the excitements of the late struggle had made politicians comparatively indifferent to home questions, and the Premier, Lord Palmerston, was so thoroughly persuaded in his own mind of the advantage and acceptability of his foreign policy that he did not dream of suspending it, or of drawing up anything like a scheme of domestic reforms. His plan was to let matters rest at home, and to provide for the people a succession of interests beyond the seas which might divert their attention from social concerns, and produce results flattering to their vanity and self-esteem.

This was the spirit in which the Chinese wars were carried on, and in which our relations with France were shortly afterwards brought to the verge of a quarrel. Though it was, as events proved, popular on the whole with the constituencies, it was by no means admired by the majority of responsible statesmen—and least of all by the more active section of the Liberal party to which Mr.

Bright, Mr. Cobden, and the International school in general belonged.

The various currents of public opinion were revealed with some distinctness, and not altogether in the manner which had been anticipated, after the defeat of the Government in March 1857. Cobden had moved and carried a resolution on the China question which Lord Palmerston accepted as a vote of censure. It was supported in the House of Commons by thirty-five advanced Liberals, including the mover and those with whom he had most commonly acted, by twenty-two Peelites, including Mr. Gladstone, and by about two hundred Conservatives; the majority against the Government being fourteen. Mr. Disraeli had, in his own manner, expressed the sentiments of the discontented Liberals when he described the Premier's programme as "no reform, new taxes, Canton blazing, Peking invaded." Lord Palmerston at once announced his resolution to appeal from the House to the judgment of the country; and his confidence was justified by the return of a larger Liberal majority than before, from which many of those who had been most prominent in opposing his policy were excluded.

The General Election took place at the end of March, when 371 Liberals were returned, for the most part pledged to support Lord Palmerston; but the members of the Peace Party suffered a humiliating defeat. Mr. Bright and Mr. Milner Gibson were rejected at Manchester, and Mr. Cobden, who had transferred his candidature from the West Riding to Huddersfield, shared the fate of his friends. They were not long without a seat in Parliament; but for the present they rested under a cloud of unpopularity and misconception.

Lord Palmerston's address to his constituents, which put the matter at issue in a striking but not an absolutely accurate shape, was well calculated to catch the popular vote. "An insolent barbarian," he wrote, "wielding

authority at Canton, violated the British flag, broke the engagements of treaties, offered rewards for the heads of British subjects in that part of China, and planned their destruction by murder, assassination, and poison. The British officers—civil and naval—on the station took those measures which appeared to them to be proper and necessary to obtain satisfaction and redress; and Her Majesty's Government had approved the course pursued. . . . A combination of political parties, not till this last session united, carried a resolution declaring the course pursued by our officers in China unjustifiable. . . . If that course was unjustifiable, the British Government, instead of expecting satisfaction, ought to offer compensation to the Chinese Commissioner; and this course the combined opponents of the Government, if their Parliamentary victory had installed them in office, must in consistency have been prepared to pursue. Will the British nation give their support to men who have thus endeavoured to make the humiliation and degradation of their country the stepping-stone to power?"

Of course, if constituencies accepted the facts as thus stated, they could only give one answer to such a question; and they gave the answer which Lord Palmerston had anticipated. The reproach of interested party combination, if it was true at all, could not have attached to Mr. Bright and his Liberal associates, since the vote of censure was entirely consistent with their professed opinions. The two hundred Conservatives had come to them, not they to the Conservatives. But now, as at the time when they protested against the Russian War, the odium fell to their lot; and they were punished for the one offence as much as for the other.

Mr. Bright was absent from England when this election was fought, being detained at Florence by ill-health. On hearing of his defeat he wrote to his late constituents in these terms:—"In taking my leave of you and of public

life, let me assure you that I can never forget the innumerable kindnesses I have received from my friends among you. No one will rejoice more than I shall in all that brings you prosperity and honours, and I am not without a hope that, when a calmer hour shall come, you shall say of Mr. Gibson and of me that, as colleagues in your representation for ten years, we have not sacrificed our principles to gain popularity, or bartered our independence for the emoluments of office or the favours of the great."

This very dignified farewell contains no expression of the sorrow which the writer must indubitably have felt at the severance of the tie which had so long and intimately connected him with Manchester. It may be assumed that a majority of the Manchester electors have more than once regretted the ingratitude thus shown to a faithful servant, who had conferred so much benefit and honour on the city—an ingratitude which has to some extent been atoned by the return of his brother Jacob to Parliament.

Dismissed by Manchester, John Bright was not long permitted to be without a seat. A vacancy was caused at Birmingham by the death of Mr. Muntz, and he was elected—though still abroad—without a contest, on the 10th of August 1857.

This was in many respects a turning-point in the career of the "Tribune of the People," and it may be compared—not indeed very closely, but as a coincidence—with the transfer of Mr. Gladstone's services from Oxford University to South Lancashire. Mr. Bright needed no "unmuzzling;" he had been as free in his action at Manchester as he could ever hope to be at Birmingham. But it is a fact that as member for the Lancashire borough he had been in a special sense a representative and leader of the Peace Party, in public estimation as well as by his own purpose and choice. He continued to occupy this position as member for Birmingham, but he was at the same time drawn into a some-

what wider and more general domain of political activity. The feeling and the objects of the Birmingham electors differed in many ways from those of the Manchester electors, and it was impossible that Mr. Bright should not have been influenced to some extent by this fact. Henceforth he was the constant advocate of popular and municipal measures, and particularly of electoral reform. He might have taken much the same course if he had remained at Manchester; but the change of constituency no doubt strengthened the tendency in these directions which he would in any case have manifested.

Lord Palmerston's victory in 1857 was not a durable one. He had not taken to heart the lesson administered to him by the House of Commons, and thus, in spite of the apparent sanction of his policy by the country, he had been compelled to resign office in February 1858. When Mr. Bright, restored in health, came back to England and resumed his political labours, he found the Conservatives in power. He addressed his new constituents at Birmingham in October, more than a year after his election; and it was against the late rather than the present Government that his criticisms were directed. It was only natural that he should take this, his earliest opportunity of defending the conduct which had lost him his seat at Manchester, and of justifying the opposition which he had consistently shown to Lord Palmerston's foreign policy. He found a ready audience at Birmingham, and had no difficulty in making good his position.

John Bright had lost none of his vigour in the interval since he had last occupied a public platform. He was as bold, as outspoken, as pungent as ever. He took occasion, in the first of two speeches delivered by him at the end of October, to criticise the action of the House of Lords—in which the Conservative Premier then sat—and he referred to the spiritual peccage, much to the scandal of some worthy

people, as "a creature—what shall I say?—of monstrous, nay, even of adulterous birth." The country knew that it was the old John Bright, with unimpaired force and undiminished courage, who had returned to the stage of public life.

The question of Reform was by this time once more coming to the front. Lord John Russell, who had desired to introduce it before the Crimean War broke out, had already mooted it in Parliament; and the junior member for Birmingham threw himself heartily into the struggle. Unforeseen delays were yet to occur before the work of 1832 could be resumed and carried forward; but we shall find that from this time Mr. Bright was amongst the most resolute and constant advocates of a further extension of the suffrage.

Of Mr. Bright's private life, in the meantime, we have little or nothing to say. His friendships were closely maintained at all times, and the record of his public career is one of constantly increasing repute in the eyes of all with whom he had to do. To his earlier friends, Richard Cobden chief amongst them, he was always warm in his attachment, and proved himself in many instances a faithful ally. At the General Election of 1859 he had the satisfaction of promoting the candidature of Cobden at Rochdale, for which borough the apostle of the Manchester movement was returned until the day of his death.





CHAPTER XVII.

AMERICA.

THE sentiments entertained by Englishmen towards the United States of America—to go no further back than the year 1860—have varied very much, according to the prejudices or predilections of individuals, and have passed in many instances from one extreme to the opposite, influenced by the course of events in the Republic itself, and also by the information which every year has supplied to us in greater profusion concerning that young and vigorous country.

During the first half of the century, there was perhaps a majority on this side of the Atlantic who continued to doubt whether the enormous European settlements in North America would be able to hold together as a single nation, under a firm and orderly Government. The elements of disruption were clearly perceived and pointed out; and it was no uncommon thing to find English newspapers and English orators writing and speaking as though the resolution of the Union into its component parts, or the failure of the Republic in one way or another, were a contingency of the near future, and one which might be rejoiced over whenever it should occur. The United States Government was not

popular amongst us, and American institutions were frequently the butt of our ridicule and the text of our homilies. Naturally enough these feelings were most common amongst Conservatives, but they were manifested by men of nearly every shade of political opinion.

It took Englishmen the greater part of a century to forget the animosity and jealousy created by the War of Independence, and the severance of so large a territory from the English Crown.

There were, however, not a few Liberals and others who had never nursed a grudge against America for the manner in which she had asserted her right to self-government, but who, on the contrary, felt a strong and sincere admiration for the new Republic, coupled with the utmost confidence in its future, and an ardent hope that its stability as a nation would be placed beyond all cavil and misgiving. No man entertained this belief and hope more devoutly than Mr. Bright, whose earliest speeches bore witness to his hearty sympathy for the United States. During the war with Russia, in particular, he more than once held up the Transatlantic federation of States as a model to the mother country, in a manner which proved more convincing to candid persons than it was pleasing to men of a sickly and perverted patriotism.

These eulogies were very striking at the time when they were uttered, both because they were rare in the mouth of an Englishman and because the contrast between the conditions of the two countries was so patently favourable, in many essential points, to the younger one. In one of his addresses in the House of Commons, in the session of 1855, Mr. Bright enforced an argument on the vast expenditure caused by the Crimean War by calling up the example of the American Republic—at that time practically without a debt, and in a most enviable position as far as the public burdens of its citizens were concerned. He made a special

appeal to Lord John Russell—who had been stoutly defending the policy of the war—to turn aside for a moment and consider whether there was “no other world of kingdoms and of nations but that old world of Europe,” with which he was “so disposed to entangle” his own country. “I wish,” he said, “the noble lord could blot out from his recollection, for a little time, William the Third, and all the remembrance of what has been called by the right hon. member for Buckinghamshire ‘the Dutch conquest,’ which is supposed to have enthroned the Whig aristocracy in this country.” There was a nation called the United States of America, the President whereof held a position not lower in honour and dignity than that of any crowned monarch on the face of the globe. The United States, Mr. Bright continued, was running a race with us in power and greatness; its population was reaching and passing our own; and it was increasing just as rapidly in wealth and enterprise. In its manufactures and general industry it was by far the most formidable rival that the manufacturers of this country had to contend with. “It has, I suppose, ten steamers for one steamer of this country; its magnificent steamships have crossed the Atlantic in a shorter time than the steamships of this country; the finest vessels which are at this moment performing the voyage between England and the Australian colonies have been built in the United States; therefore, in shipbuilding industry the United States not only compete with, but in some respects even excel, this country.”

The expenditure of England for the current year of 1855 was as high as eighty-six millions sterling; the National Debt was nine times as much. In contrast with this, Mr. Bright mentioned that the Government of the United States had at that moment enough money in its treasury to pay off the whole of the public debt; whilst, if they were to deduct the expenses of the Government of the United States, not only of the general Government but also of the

thirty independent sovereign States, from the £86,000,000 we were spending, they would find that at least £70,000,000 would be left, which was therefore the sum of taxation that we were paying more than the people of the United States.

These were unpalatable truths for most of Mr. Bright's hearers; but the time was not far off when the strength of the argument deduced from them was to be very considerably diminished. Early in the following decade the breach between the Northern and Southern States, which many men had seen to be widening for years past, and from the issue of which many believed that the Union must inevitably be broken up into two federations, resolved itself into a terrible civil war, which at once robbed the country of that proud superiority whereon its friends had hitherto been justified in laying stress. The shrewdest and most judicious Americans foresaw that the curse of slavery could not be rooted out except at an enormous sacrifice of blood and money, and by the loss, at any rate for a time, of the solvency and comparative freedom from taxation which they had so long enjoyed. Their friends abroad were reluctantly forced to the same conclusion; and certainly not even Mr. Bright himself, nor any of his brethren of the Peace Party, deemed the cost too great to pay for so sacred an object. From the first outbreak of the War of Secession, the genuine admirers of the American Republic entertained an absolute confidence in the right, the duty, and the power of the Northern States to insist on the abolition of slavery as an institution, and not only so, but to maintain the Union at the same time. However much they might regret the war that was forced on the United States Government by the Southern slave-owners, and however deeply they lamented the check which was thus given to the prosperity and progress of "the Transatlantic English nation," they had no doubt as to the imperative nature of the task imposed upon the North. And men who were acquainted

with history, and knew that American slavery was a legacy of English rule, had cause to look upon the conflict with more than ordinary concern.*

In 1860 the Presidential election raised Mr. Abraham Lincoln to power; and from that time forward the process of disunion began. Lincoln was pledged to abolition; and the Southern States, which had long had a monopoly of office—uninterruptedly since 1828—and which regarded the success of the Northern candidate as a menace and a fatal danger to their institutions, began to prepare for a struggle of life and death. Many attempts were made to avert the disaster, and there was even a talk of compromise; but the effort was in vain. The South declared its resolution to cling at all hazards to its "rights;" it took up arms, established a Confederate Government, appealed to the nations of Europe, sent over it representatives, and found sufficient credit to raise millions of money in the European capitals.

At the end of 1861, Mr. Bright spoke at a banquet at Rochdale on the subject of the war, and laid down in very clear terms the position of himself and his friends in the matter. It might have been supposed in some quarters that

* Mr. Bright quoted, in one of his speeches, certain pregnant words of Mr. Jefferson in 1774—two years before the Declaration of Independence—to the following effect:—"For the most trifling reasons, and sometimes for no conceivable reason at all, His Majesty has rejected laws of the most salutary tendency. The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa. Yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibition, and by imposing duties which might amount to prohibition, have hitherto been defeated by His Majesty's negative—thus preferring the immediate advantage of a few British corsairs to the lasting interests of the American States, and to the rights of human nature, deeply wounded by this infamous practice."

the Peace Party would be unable, on principle, to sympathise with the North in their struggle to maintain or restore the Union; but Mr. Bright explained how it was that they could and did so. Not very long ago, he observed, Englishmen had given twenty millions sterling—an annual tax of something like a million—to set free eight hundred thousand slaves in the British Colonies. We boasted of our love of freedom in every country, and under all circumstances; and now we found the same question of freedom against slavery brought to the front in America. For thirty years, he said, this question had constantly been coming to the surface, disturbing social life, and overthrowing almost all political harmony in the working of the United States. In the North there was no secession. The disturbances and the insurrection were found wholly in the South and in the Slave States. “The object of the South is this, to escape from the majority who wish to limit the area of slavery. They wish to found a Slave State freed from the influence and opinions of freedom. The Free States in the North now stand before the world as the advocates and defenders of freedom and civilisation. The Slave States offer themselves for the recognition of a Christian nation, based upon the foundation, the unchangeable foundation in their eyes, of slavery and barbarism.”

In England, during the earlier stages of the war, the majority were inclined to back the cause of the South against the North. It seems strange to us at this distance of time that it should have been so; but so it was. Mr. Gladstone, Lord John Russell, and most of the prominent men of both political parties, thought it impossible that the North should coerce the slave-owning States, and prevent them from breaking up the Union; and some of them even conceded the right of the South to maintain their “domestic institution.” The ill-advised seizure of Messrs. Mason and Slidell, the Confederate delegates, on an English vessel—

though the act was promptly repudiated by the Washington Government—contributed to set public opinion in this country against the North; but at the same time there were not wanting eminent public men, like the late Lord Derby and the Duke of Argyll, who held Lincoln and his Cabinet to be justified in their action.

Mr. Bright was severe upon the writers and speakers who recommended the Northern States to agree to a peaceable separation; and he did not shrink from retorting upon some of them the taunt so often levelled at himself and his friends, of being a “peace at any price” party. In the speech above mentioned, he said:—

“No one will expect that I should stand forward as the advocate of war, or as the defender of that great sum of all crimes which is involved in war. But when we are discussing a question of this nature, it is only fair that we should discuss it upon principles which are acknowledged not only in the country where the strife is being carried on, but are universally acknowledged in this country. When I discussed the Russian War, seven or eight years ago, I always condemned it, on principles which were accepted by the Government and people of England, and I took my facts from the blue-books presented to Parliament. I take the liberty, then, of doing that in this case; and I say that, looking at the principles avowed in England, and at its policy, there is no man, who is not absolutely a non-resistant in every sense, who can fairly challenge the conduct of the American Government in this war. It would be a curious thing to find that the party in this country which on every public question affecting England is in favour of war at any cost, when they come to speak of the duty of the Government of the United States, is in favour of ‘peace at any price.’ I want to know whether it has ever been admitted by politicians, or statesmen, or people, that a great nation can be broken up at any time by any particular section of any part of that nation. . . . What can be more monstrous than that we, as we call ourselves, to some extent, an educated, a moral, and a Christian nation—at a moment when an accident of this kind occurs, before we have made a representation to the American Government, before we have heard a word from it in reply—should be all up in arms, every sword leaping from its scabbard, and every man looking about for his pistols and his blunderbusses? I think the conduct pursued—and I have no doubt just the same is

pursued by a certain class in America—is much more the conduct of savages than of Christian and civilised men. No; let us be calm. You recollect how we were dragged into the Russian War—how we ‘drifted’ into it. You know that I, at least, have not upon my head any of the guilt of that fearful war. You know that it cost one hundred millions of money to this country; that it cost at least the lives of forty thousand Englishmen; that it disturbed your trade; that it nearly doubled the armies of Europe; that it placed the relations of Europe on a much less peaceful footing than before; and that it did not effect one single thing of all those that it was promised to effect. . . . Whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonoured independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of free men in the North will be thirty millions, or even fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said amongst them that, in the darkest hour of their country’s trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; but if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name.”

This was a very striking speech, considering the time at which it was delivered, and the state of public opinion throughout England. The great mass of that opinion was prejudiced against the North; and indeed, to do full justice between the opposing sentiments, it must be remembered that there were many reasons or causes of prejudice against which only the more judicious and stable minds could be expected to contend. Neither country had done much to win the favour of the other; there had been a mutual dislike, or jealousy, existing from a former generation, and influential papers in both countries had encouraged, instead of seeking to allay, the ill-feeling. The *Times* in England, the *Herald* in New York, with many other organs on both

sides, had employed, and persisted in employing, the wildest language of provocation. The recent violation of international law by the Washington Government, in the capture of Slidell and Mason from an English vessel, had very naturally roused a certain excess of excitement in England; and thus Mr. Bright's calm and sensible speech at that particular moment was all the more creditable to him, and impressive for those who heard or read it.

The attitude of a public man in presence of the American civil war could not fail to be an indication of the strength, foresight, and statesmanlike breadth of his mind. There were many, indubitable statesmen, and Liberals as well as Conservatives, who could not in the first instance share the views entertained by the member for Birmingham. Mr. Gladstone was one of these; and the reader will remember how handsomely he apologised, a few years later, for the error into which he had been led. It is not necessary to enter into any comparison between the statesmanship of Mr. Gladstone and that of Mr. Bright, in order to extol the one at the expense of the other, or to appreciate fully the true wisdom of mind displayed by the latter in this critical condition of affairs.

The passage which we have quoted from his speech is sufficient to show on what grounds he had formed the conclusion that the North was justified in resisting the secession of the South. Some there were who argued that the question was affected by the relative strength of the Federals and the Confederates, explaining their support of the South by contending that the North was utterly unable to coerce the seven insurgent States, and that it was consequently the duty of the Government of President Lincoln to consent peaceably to a separation which they could not prevent. This was not Mr. Bright's view. He admitted the possibility of a victory for the South. He did not venture to predict the result of the struggle, and his main

arguments were based on the condition and prospects of the North in the event of its failure to maintain the Union intact. But on one point he was quite certain, and that was that the United States Government had no option but to preserve its authority over the whole country committed to its charge, to resist the attack made upon it by the Slave States, to vindicate its supporters in those States, and especially to insist upon the policy of abolition, in the interests of the existing slaves as well as in its own interests.

There can be no doubt that he was right in this judgment, and that he would have been right in it none the less if the fortune of war had declared the other way, and a great slave-holding Power had been established—to the detriment of the whole human race—on the Gulf of Florida and the southern Atlantic.

On the subject of the future prosperity of the United States, Mr. Bright was singularly accurate in his forecast. All that he said has come true, and it is even manifest that his predictions might have been yet more confident and more complimentary to the vigorous young Republic. Entertaining this belief, and knowing all that the fact implied for England, it was only right that he should wish to impress his views upon his fellow-countrymen.

There was, it will be remembered, a special cause of interest in the American Civil War for Mr. Bright as a Lancashire manufacturer, and for the populous district which depended so largely for a supply of raw cotton from the Southern States. As soon as this supply failed, the staple industry of Lancashire began to languish; and it was presently thrown into the deepest distress. The cotton famine, as it was commonly called, was a national disaster which taught us how largely, in this one respect, we depended upon the vast Transatlantic storehouse; and it was not a little curious that some of those who were most

active in relieving the starving operatives of Manchester and the other centres of the cotton industry should have been specially noted, like Lord Derby and Mr. Bright, for their sympathy with the Northern States.

In addition to the lesson of our dependence on the United States for this amongst other supplies, it was brought home to the people of England that they had been displaying less than their usual shrewdness in making indispensable to them a nation with whom they had not been careful to keep on good terms, and whom they were actually prepared to see weakened or destroyed by internecine strife. This was a fact which supplied Mr. Bright with another forcible argument; whilst it increased the responsibility of those who would have rejoiced to see the cotton-producing States converted into a compact slave-holding power, on whom they would hereafter have had to rely for one of the chief staples of English industry.

Mr. Bright had taken a consistent course in this matter for a dozen years past, so that he was completely exonerated from the charge of being influenced in his political conclusions by motives of personal interest. The fundamental principles of his political belief led him from the first to protest against the absolute dependence for cotton on the Southern States of America. His Committee on the condition of India in 1848 had a direct effect in stimulating the Indian cotton trade; and, indeed, so much was he impressed by the importance of encouraging this trade to the home country that in moving for the Committee, he had urged it in a passage of singular prescience as one of his strongest arguments. "We ought not," he said in 1847, "to forget that the whole of the cotton grown in America is produced by slave labour, and this, I think, all will admit—that, no matter as to the period in which slavery may have existed, abolished it will ultimately be, either by peaceable means or by violent means. Whether it comes to an end by peace-

able means or otherwise, there will in all probability be an interruption to the production of cotton, and the calamity which must in consequence fall upon a part of the American Union will be felt throughout the manufacturing districts of this country."

The Committee of 1848 had no immediate result in this particular direction, and therefore, two years later, Mr. Bright moved that a Royal Commission should proceed to India "to inquire into the obstacles which prevent the increased growth of cotton in India, and to report upon any circumstances which may injuriously affect the economical and industrial condition of the native population, being cultivators of the soil, within the presidencies of Madras and Bombay." The commission was not granted, mainly on account of the opposition shown to the scheme by Sir John Hobhouse and the Court of Directors in Leadenhall Street; but it was approved by Sir Robert Peel, and even by Lord John Russell, and the motion gave rise to an interesting debate. In the course of his speech on this occasion Mr. Bright made another pregnant and significant forecast of what was certain to happen in America—ten years before the actual breaking out of the struggle. Observing that the cotton supplied from the United States was the product of slave labour, he maintained that, whether they approved of any particular mode of abolishing slavery in the country or not, they were all convinced that it would be impossible in any country, and most of all in America, to keep between two and three millions of the population permanently in a state of bondage. "By whatever means that system is to be abolished, whether by insurrection—which I should deplore—or by some great measure of justice from the Government—one thing is certain, that the production of cotton must be interfered with for a considerable time after such an event has taken place; and it may happen that the greatest measure of

freedom that has ever been conceded may be a measure the consequence of which will inflict mischief upon the greatest industrial pursuit that engages the labour of the operative population of this country."

The prophet was without honour in his own country, and, still worse, his views were without acceptance in the quarters where they might have been converted into practical measures. Nevertheless, the cotton trade of India was greatly stimulated by these discussions, and by the steps taken in Manchester and Bombay. In 1846 the supply of cotton from India had been 94,000 bales. In the year 1859 the supply had risen to more than half-a-million; and in 1861, owing to the falling-off in the American trade, and the high prices commanded in English markets by any kind of raw cotton, it was close upon one million bales.

Mr. Bright discussed this question of the cotton supply, in connection with the War of Secession, in a speech to his constituents in June, 1862. He returned to it, and to the general question of the war and its causes, in a speech at Rochdale early in the following year, supporting a vote of thanks for contributions which had been sent from New York in relief of the sufferers in Lancashire. He took the chair at a mass meeting in St. James's Hall, convened by the London Trades' Union; and again at a meeting at the London Tavern, when Mr. Moncure Conway delivered a lecture in behalf of the emancipation of the negroes. On this latter occasion, he put the matter very pithily as to the relation between the question of public policy and the question of private interest. "I come," he said to his London audience "from the midst of the great cotton industry of Lancashire; much the largest portion of anything I have in the world depends upon it; not a little of it is now utterly valueless, during the continuance of this war. My neighbours, by thousands and scores of thousands, are suffering, more or less, as I am suffering; and many of

them, as you know—more than a quarter of a million of them—have been driven from a subsistence gained by their honourable labour to the extremest poverty, and to a dependence upon the charity of their fellow-countrymen. My interest is the interest of all the population. My interest is against a mere enthusiasm, a mere sentiment, a mere visionary fancy of freedom as against slavery. I am speaking now as a matter of business. I am glad when matters of business go straight with matters of high sentiment and morality, and from this platform I declare my solemn conviction that there is no greater enemy to Lancashire, to its capital and to its labour, than the man who wishes the cotton agriculture of the Southern States to be continued under the conditions of slave labour.”

On the 30th of June 1863, Mr. Roebuck moved a resolution in the House of Commons in favour of recognising the Southern Confederacy as a belligerent Power. Mr. Bright spoke vigorously against the motion, which, he declared, would tend most undoubtedly to alienate the States from us if the North were victorious, and to bring us, in the other event, face to face with an aggressive slave-holding nation. Ridiculing Mr. Roebuck's statement that the United States had always been an overbearing and bullying nation—though as a matter of fact the South had held the reins of power for more than thirty years—he observed that there never was a State less capable of aggression than the United States of America. “I speak of its government, of its confederation, of the peculiarities of its organisation; for the House will agree with me that nothing is more peculiar than the fact of the great power which the separate States, both of the North and South, exercise upon the policy and course of the country. I will undertake to say that, unless in a question of overwhelming magnitude, which would be able to unite any people, it would be utterly hopeless to expect that all the States of the American Union would

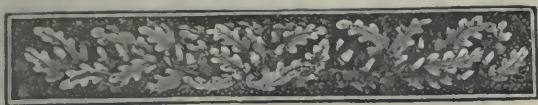
join together to support the central Government in any plan of aggression on England or any other country of Europe. Besides, nothing can be more certain than this, that the Government which is now in power, and the party which has elected Mr. Lincoln to office, is a moral and peaceable party, which has been above all things anxious to cultivate the best possible state of feeling with regard to England. The hon. and learned gentleman, of all men, ought not to entertain this fear of United States aggression, for he is always boasting of his readiness to come into the field himself. I grant that it would be a great necessity indeed which would justify a conscription in calling out the hon. and learned gentleman, but I say he ought to consider well before he spreads these alarms among the people. For the sake of this miserable jealousy, and that he may help to break up a friendly nation, he would depart from the usages of nations, and create an everlasting breach between the people of England and the people of the United States of America. He would do more; and, notwithstanding what he has said to-night, I may put this as my strongest argument against his case—he would throw the weight of England into the scale in favour of the cause of slavery.”

If the South should be victorious, and the Union should be built up again on the basis of the Southern organisation, Mr. Bright believed that the result would be disastrous for America, if not for the world at large. In that case he would certainly expect that the United States would be found to be a bullying and aggressive Power; “but I believe,” he said, “in the moral government of the world, and therefore I cannot believe that it will take place. With their great navy, and their almost unlimited power, they might seek to drive England out of Canada, France out of Mexico, and whatever nations are interested in them out of the islands of the West Indies; and you might then have a great State built upon slavery and war, instead of that free

State to which I look, built up upon an educated people, upon general freedom, and upon morality in government."

There is no need to touch upon the results of the American War as regards America itself, nor even as regards our own relations with it, except to point out that Mr. Bright was entirely justified by them in the bold, clear, and statesmanlike course which he had followed throughout. He sounded the note of triumph—not of personal triumph, but of pride and satisfaction at the complete abolition of slavery in the United States—at a public reception of William Lloyd Garrison in June 1867, in St. James's Hall, when he occupied the chair, and eloquently reviewed the long struggle against negro slavery in America. He was content to name the principal workers in the cause on the other side of the Atlantic; but he himself had taken no mean part in the labour, and had championed the cause in England with unsurpassed courage, brilliance, and effect.





CHAPTER XVIII.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

MR. BRIGHT seemed to have returned to work in 1858, resolved to devote his energies to the attainment of Reform. Wars were for the moment in abeyance. With the exception of the quarrel with France, which did not reach the last extremity, there was no pressing question of foreign policy ; and to all appearance there was an opportunity for the enactment of a measure long desired by all earnest Liberals.

We have seen that the Economists in particular looked forward with hope to the further extension of the franchise, believing that retrenchment could not be expected with any degree of confidence until the Parliamentary vote had been conferred on the numerous classes of wage-earners, who more than any other felt the pinch of poverty and taxation, and who might be reckoned on to arrest the flow of wasteful expenditure as soon as they had the casting-vote which a new Reform Bill must give them. Mr. Bright had more than once referred his friends to the morrow of such an enactment as the date when they might, with greater hope of success, raise the standards of peace and retrenchment.

The great towns had by this time become clamorous

for a more even distribution of political power. Those which were inadequately represented, and those which, in spite of a rapid increase of population, were not represented at all, made their demands heard. The stimulation of national industries during the past thirty or forty years had increased the size and importance of many manufacturing towns, and it was evident to most men that their influence must be acknowledged without long delay. There were, however, degrees of wisdom and prudence amongst the Liberal leaders, some of whom refused to admit the necessity of Reform, and determined—as we may be excused for believing—that the franchise should not be lowered or extended in their lifetime.

Of such a mood was Lord Palmerston, who combined with his restless foreign policy a tendency to torpor and stagnation at home, and who certainly must be held responsible for the complete suspension of the movement between the years 1859 and 1865.

His colleague and successor, on the other hand—Lord John Russell—was one of the warmest advocates of Reform. He had been amongst the first to press the question forward after the passing of the Act of 1832, which he regarded as a temporising and incomplete measure. As soon as he was in a position to initiate the action of the Government, he began to unfold the scheme which commended itself to him. He was preparing for a serious and arduous struggle in 1853, when the war with Russia intervened and upset all his calculations. In 1858 he was almost as eager as Mr. Bright himself for the restoration of the question to the front rank of practical politics.

When the failure of the Conspiracy to Murder Bill had given Lord Palmerston his second great check in the House of Commons, and had caused his resignation of the Premiership in February 1858, Lord Derby took office without a majority. It was all but indispensable for him and Mr.

Disraeli, under the circumstances—as it was for them in very similar circumstances nine years later—to introduce a Reform Bill. Reform was perhaps the only question on which they could hope to enlist the co-operation of a large section of the Liberal party, to the discomfiture of the Whigs, who had not themselves seen fit to include the subject in their programme. Accordingly, in 1859 Mr. Disraeli brought a measure into the House of Commons, in which he was then the leader of his party and the representative of the Government.

As Mr. Bright had said in the previous autumn, the question of Reform was in considerable peril at this moment, for it had no open enemies, whilst its most prominent friends were men who had uniformly withstood the movement when in Opposition. There had been four Governments pledged to Parliamentary Reform within the last few years. “Lord John Russell, as Prime Minister, introduced a Reform Bill, and afterwards, in the Government of Lord Aberdeen, Lord John Russell introduced another Reform Bill, and the least said of these two Bills, especially of the latter, the better. The Government which has recently been overthrown pledged itself to the country and the House of Commons to bring in a Reform Bill, but at the time when it came to an unexpected, but a not undeserved end, no Bill had been prepared, so that we knew nothing of the particulars of which it was to be composed. We have now a Government under the chieftainship of Lord Derby, who, during his short term of office in 1852, stated, if I remember right, that one of the chief objects of his Government would be to stem the tide of democracy.” It might be that Lord Derby had entirely changed his mind, that he was as much converted to Parliamentary Reform as Sir Robert Peel, in 1856, was converted to Corn Law repeal. If so, the question might be in good hands, but if not, it was but reasonable to view his course with suspicion,

and to look upon the position of the question in his hands with alarm.

This was Mr. Bright's estimate of the situation in October 1858. He distrusted the general, the almost universal sentiment in favour of Reform, which reminded him—as he told his Birmingham audience—of the condition of the Atlantic cable, of which it had been said that “the currents were visible, but the signals were wholly indistinct.”

As for his own ideas on the subject, they were distinct enough. The existing representation was no better than a sham—“a fraudulent thing,” for which it was the duty of the Government to substitute a real and honest system. There were not wanting models on which Parliament might reasonably proceed to frame such a system for itself. There was a franchise in the parishes, a franchise in the poor-law unions, a franchise in the corporations. Why should not the municipal franchise, which had worked so well in the large towns, be adopted for the election of members to the House of Commons? “There is one great point gained in such a franchise—your registration would be easy and inexpensive. There is another point—that whatever its omissions, whatever its exclusions, they would not be directed against any one particular class. It would admit the working people to electoral power just as fully as it would admit the middle, or what may be called the higher and richer classes. Therefore, as regards class and class, it would remove a great defect of the Reform Bill, and would give a suffrage so wide that I believe no one would suppose it did not afford a fair representation of all classes. I do not want anybody for a moment to suppose that this particular franchise is better than manhood suffrage. I am only speaking of what Government might do, of what it ought to do, and of what it might do, moreover, in accordance with the vast majority of opinion which exists in this country on this question. With regard to the counties I shall say little. I

know no good reason why the franchise should not be as extensive there as in the boroughs; but there appears to be a general understanding that the next step in counties shall be one short of that. But I think it is of great importance that the 40s. franchise should be extended to all parts of the United Kingdom as fully as it is to the people of England and Wales."

With regard to the distribution of electoral power, Mr. Bright cited various examples from foreign countries, and from the English dependencies, several of which had adopted very satisfactory forms of popular representation, assigning members to each district in proportion to the number of voters. He did not ask for a complete recasting of the system as it existed in England, but at any rate it was reasonable to demand "an honest approximation." It was "a miserable delusion" that Birmingham, with its 250,000 or 300,000 inhabitants, sent only two members to the House of Commons. But, Mr. Bright continued, "if every man I see here before me had a vote, or if every man outside had a vote, how will he be better off if he sends only two members to the House of Commons, while some boroughs of 10,000 inhabitants, equal to one of the small corners of your city, have a right to return the same number? The whole thing, as at present arranged, is a disgraceful fraud. It ought to be put an end to, and, if it is not put an end to, your representation will remain for the future very little better than a farce."

It is clear that John Bright had returned to work, after his two years of illness, with even more than his wonted vigour and trenchancy of speech. He entered into the question of Reform in a spirit of thorough and eager determination, treating the subject with practical sense and courage. But he was far in advance of public opinion, or at any rate of official and party opinion. He not merely demanded an approximation to theoretical completeness,

but affirmed that the franchise would be worth little to the new electors without the protection of the ballot.

“I want to give a word of warning to those persons who are now engaged, if there be any engaged, in constructing a Reform Bill for the next session. Let them not bring in a delusive and sham measure. Universal suffrage, equal distribution, vote by ballot—any of these points may or may not be perilous; but if there be one thing more distinctly perilous than another to the ruling classes in this country, it is that now, when they are committed to at least a temporary (I wish it were a permanent) settlement of this great question, they should bring forward and pass a Bill which, while it pretends to offer you something great in the way of constitutional freedom, is found immediately after it has passed to be nothing but a delusion and a sham. It will disappoint everybody; it will exasperate all the Reformers; it will render a feeling, which is now not bitter, both bitter and malignant, and within twelve months after the Bill has passed, and the cheat is discovered, we shall be entered in all probability upon another agitation, but an agitation of a very different character from any we have yet seen. Let us have a real Bill, a good Bill, or no Bill at all.

“The question at this moment is in the hands of the enemy. We stand the risk of having brought before us what I will describe as ‘a country gentlemen’s Reform Bill.’ The country gentlemen have not been notorious for their sympathies in favour of Reform. We have always been carrying on, for the last thirty years and more, a steady and perpetual war against the predominance and the power of the country gentlemen in Parliament. If we look at their past policy we shall not have much confidence in their proposed measure. Their wars, their debts, their taxes, placed upon the bulk of the people, their stout opposition to the Reform Bill of 1832—all this leads us greatly to suspect them; and I confess, for my own part, I wish the question of Reform were in the hands of Reformers—in the hands of men of whose sympathies with respect to it we could not have, from their past lives, the shadow of a doubt. I have great fears that until you have a Ministry in which there are men who are really in favour of Reform, and of an honest Reform, you are not likely to get any such measure as the most moderate among us ought to be in the least satisfied with.

“I must warn you against one phrase which I find our friends (we cannot call any of them our opponents), the bewildered Reformers, are beginning to use. They say we must not on any account ‘Americanise’ our institutions. Now, I know only one institution in America of

which the Americans need to be very greatly ashamed; and that institution was established under the Monarchy, although unfortunately it has lived and flourished under the Republic. They tell us in America numbers overwhelm property and education. Well, but numbers have not overwhelmed property and education in England, and yet look at legislation in England. . . . In all the sovereign and independent States of America there is a franchise as wide as that which I have proposed to-night; there is an exact and equal allotment of members to the electors; and there is, throughout most of the States, the protection of the ballot. Yet in America we find law, order, property secure, and a population in the enjoyment of physical comforts and abundance such as are not known to the great body of the people in this country, and which never have been known in any country in any age of the world before. Will any man dare to tell me, in the presence of this audience, that the English nation in England is a worse nation than the English nation in America? Are we less educated, are we less industrious, are we less moral, are we less subject to the law, are we less disposed to submit to all the just requirements of the Government? If we are so, and if the English nation in America excels us in all these particulars, does it not look very likely that the institutions in England are not as good in the training and rearing of a nation as the institutions in the United States?"

The orator disclaimed any intention of asserting, as a fact, that American institutions were better than English institutions; but he maintained that the presumption was decidedly in favour of approximating our Parliamentary franchise to that which existed in the United States. And he appealed eloquently, even passionately, to his hearers to insist upon the concession of their electoral rights. The appeal was answered, as far as Birmingham was concerned, with remarkable heartiness; and the delay which was imported into the question by official timidity or lukewarmness served only to increase the strenuousness of the demand on the part of the metropolis of the Midlands.

On the 10th of December Mr. Bright was invited, in conjunction with Mr. Milner Gibson, to meet his old constituents in Manchester; and on this occasion he returned to the subject of his Birmingham speech. At Edinburgh

and Glasgow, some days later, he carried on the campaign, speaking always with the same blunt and straightforward manner, and carrying enthusiasm to the hearts of his hearers. As he said at Glasgow, he had been charged with continually using the same figures and facts wherever he went. What would his critics have said if he used different figures and facts each time? It was the same cause and the same grievance; and he had undertaken to address and convince the same kind of people—that is, the men who are wrongly deprived of the franchise. He did not mince matters; he never omitted to dwell on the serious cause for complaint which the ruling classes had given to the unrepresented classes.

Mr. Bright has often been accused of appealing to the passions of his audience, and of dealing by preference in invective and inflammatory language. His Reform speeches undoubtedly breathe a spirit of sincere indignation, and paint everything in its true colours, without fear or favour. At Manchester, after speaking of the influences under which the House of Commons was elected, he declared the result of the system to be that the so-called representative Chamber was “a sort of deputy to the House of Lords, and an organ of the great territorial interest of the country. It hates changes, with an animosity that nothing can assuage. It hates economy. Let any man propose in the House of Commons that there shall be a fair committee appointed, to which shall be submitted those enormous estimates of which we have so much reason to complain, and you will find very few persons in the House will vote for such a committee, and it will be stoutly resisted by the Government, whether formed from the Conservative or the Whig section of the House. The House hates equality of taxation. The succession duty is a glaring instance of it. The income-tax is another instance scarcely less glaring. It gives to property vast influence in the government of the country,

and it perpetually shields property from its fair burden of taxation."

This was not pleasing to some of Mr. Bright's colleagues in the House, though there were plenty who candidly admitted the truth of what he said. The "popular House," he maintained, was for the present little better than a sham. So far from representing the people—even since the Act of 1832—it represented the aristocracy and the landowners; and the only certain method of getting justice from it on a large scale was to frighten it into acquiescence. Before the Reform Bill, Catholic Emancipation was granted, when a civil war was about to break out in Ireland. "You know that the Reform Bill itself was granted when an insurrection, perhaps a revolution, was at the door. And you know that in 1846 the repeal of the Corn Laws was granted—not because the House of Commons or the House of Lords wished to grant it. By no means."

Even now, the House of Commons would not sanction the ballot—not because it did not understand it as well as the people who demanded it, but precisely because it did understand it. "Do you suppose there would be such a whip in the House, such a steady and powerful phalanx of members brought up, county members especially, to vote against the ballot, if they did not believe all we say in favour of the ballot? You have had it discussed since the Reform Bill. The argument has been already exhausted for twenty years, yet for all that they do not give you the ballot."

As Mr. Bright showed, the proposals which he and his friends brought forward were not new, and there was nothing in them that ought to be considered extreme or revolutionary. Sixty years before, Mr. Fox had asserted that the extension of the franchise to householders was "the best and most justifiable plan of reform." This was the gist of the demand now made by the most thorough-

going reformers, and yet, sixty years after Fox had spoken, they were denounced as immoderate because they asked for the same thing—a thing which their forefathers had possessed many generations ago.*

Mr. Bright did not confine himself to illustrations and abstract arguments. He formulated a scheme of Parliamentary reform, drawn up in the shape of a Bill, which was never submitted to the House in express terms, though it was familiar to all who took part in the discussions of the time. The provisions of this scheme included the extension of the franchise to all ratepayers in boroughs—which, of course, implied all householders; to lodgers paying a rent of ten pounds annually; and to all residents in county constituencies paying a like rental. The franchise of freemen in boroughs was to be discontinued, so far as future registrations were concerned. The expenses of the returning-officers at elections were to be borne by the ratepayers in general. Voting was to be by ballot. Fifty-six of the smallest English boroughs, twenty-one Scotch, and nine Irish, were to be disfranchised; and thirty-four other boroughs were to be content with one member each. The seats thus

* The passage from Fox's speech in 1797 is worth quoting, if only for its curious significance in the history of the Reform movement. "I think," said the great Whig leader, "that to extend the representation to housekeepers is the best and most justifiable plan of Reform. I think also that it is a most perfect recurrence to first principles—I do not mean to the first principles of society, nor to the abstract principles of representation, but to the first known and recorded principles of our constitution. According to the early history of England, and the highest authorities in our Parliamentary constitution, I find this to be the case. It is the opinion of the celebrated Glanville, that in all cases where no particular right intervenes, the common law right of paying scot and lot was the right of election in the land. This was the opinion of Serjeant Glanville, and of one of the most celebrated Committees of which our Parliamentary history has to boast; and this, in my opinion, is the safest line of conduct you can adopt."

gained were to be given to the new important boroughs and to counties, in proportion to the population.

Most of these suggestions were adopted in 1867, but for the present they were regarded as extravagant and impracticable. Lord Derby had no notion of accepting Bright's views, or Fox's, or the old common-law rights. When he had screwed up his courage to the point of introducing a Reform Bill, or of asking his lieutenant in the House of Commons to do so, he limited the ingenuity of that lieutenant in such a way that the latter was obliged to concoct a number of "fancy franchises," which elicited more of laughter than of admiration from all who heard them. Every man who had ten pounds a year as dividends on public securities, or a lump sum of sixty pounds in a Savings' Bank, was to possess the Parliamentary franchise. Every old soldier, sailor, or civil servant, who had been rewarded with a pension of twenty pounds or more, was to be further rewarded with a vote. Every Bachelor of Arts, every Reverend, every lawyer and doctor, and every school-master with a respectable diploma, were to be enfranchised by this Tory Reform Bill—which, however, did not give the ballot, and did not reduce the qualifying rental below ten pounds in boroughs.

Such was the measure proposed by Mr. Disraeli in the session of 1859, whereby he hoped to "dish the Whigs." But it was very speedily found that the attempt was a hopeless one. Lord John Russell would not accept the Bill as a reasonable satisfaction of the demand for reform, and when the second reading was proposed he moved an amendment to the effect that it was neither just nor politic to interfere in the manner proposed with the freehold franchise; and that no readjustment of the franchise would satisfy the House or the country which did not provide for a greater extension of the suffrage in cities and boroughs than was contemplated in the proposed measure. After

several nights' debate a division was taken, when there were 291 for the second reading, and 330 against it.

Mr. Bright's speech on this occasion, though it was not one of his best, was strong enough in itself to crush the Government measure. It must have convinced Mr. Disraeli himself that he had proposed an utterly impossible scheme. "Does any man believe"—Mr. Bright asked the House—"that this is the sort of Bill that the Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks best for the country? Does any one suppose that a man with his intellect, and who understands all the bearings of this question, approves of—I will not say the 'deplorable rubbish,' but the grievous and fatal mistakes to be found in the clauses of this Bill? He knows that this Bill in its present shape is a Bill framed to satisfy the prejudices, the scruples, the convictions, if you like, and the fears of the one hundred and fifty country gentlemen who sit behind him."

The most effective passage in this speech was one in which Mr. Bright ridiculed the fear of the working-men which had been expressed by politicians who considered that the time had not come to extend the franchise to them. Why, he asked, were hon. members on the other side so much afraid of the people?

"The manufacturing, the employing class, does not fear them. At the Bradford meeting there were present, when I moved the resolution, Mr. Titus Salt and Mr. Crossley, the brother of the member for Halifax. Those gentlemen conduct vast manufacturing and commercial undertakings. There are no men more prosperous, and none have more confidence in the people. Those two gentlemen agreed cordially with every proposition I made as to an extension of the suffrage. The meetings at Rochdale, Bury, Blackburn, and Bolton were attended by gentlemen almost equally eminent. At the meeting at Bolton there were four gentlemen who employ not less than 6000 or 7000 people, and who own property of not less than a million sterling. One of those gentlemen thought my proposal as to the suffrage was not sufficiently extensive. Why is it they do not regard the people with the same fear

that you do? They must know what they are about; they know that any convulsion or disturbance in society would touch them first. Your landed estates are much more permanent as property than our manufactures. Any disturbance or violent action of a democratic nature would be more dangerous to us than to you. Yet a large proportion of the employers of labour favour a large extension of the suffrage, and believe it would prove for the safety of their property; for the working men, in thinking over this question, feel they are distrusted, that they are marked as inferiors, that they are a sort of pariahs. In that position, should there be an opportunity, great discontent and turbulence might arise; but if you give them a vote they will have more self-respect, more elevation of mind."

The Conservatives, and even the most timid of the Whigs, believed that Parliamentary Reform was dangerous to the State, and that to give poor men votes was to invite the democracy to make war upon the higher ranks of society. But Mr. Bright showed these alarmists that the result of their dogged resistance to change might be to bring about the very evils which they feared. A Conservative speaker, referring to the unsettled condition of Europe at the moment, had solemnly warned the House to beware what it was about to do in the matter of Reform. But Mr. Bright said:—

"I draw quite a different lesson, a different conclusion, from what he said of the state of Europe. In 1830 there was also a state of Europe, and especially of France, that was not satisfactory, and it had great effect on the legislation of this House, in the course of the two succeeding years, on the question of Reform. In 1848 the state of Europe was again unsatisfactory, and was it not a subject of congratulation that two years before the Corn Laws had been abolished, and one great cause of discontent removed? I assure you that resistance is not always Conservative. I profess to be, in intention, as Conservative as you,—I believe infinitely more so, if you look forward twenty or thirty years into the future. Was not Free Trade Conservative? And yet you resisted it to the last. I recollect occasions when the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us of the cruelty practised on the ruined and betrayed agriculturist. I recollect he addressed us on the condition of the farm labourer two or three years afterwards; and since that time his condition has been improving rapidly. Is not prosperity Conservative? Is not peace Conservative? Any energies I possess I have devoted to

their advance ; I have endeavoured to stand on the rules of Political Economy, and to be guided by the higher rules of true Morality ; and when advocating a measure of Reform larger than some are prepared to grant, I appear in that character, for I believe a substantial measure of Reform would elevate and strengthen the character of our population ; that, in the language of the beautiful prayer read here every day, it would tend 'to knit together the hearts of all persons and estates within this realm.' I believe it would add to the authority of the decisions of Parliament ; and I feel satisfied it would confer a lustre, which time would never dim, on that benignant reign under which we have the happiness to live."

We have examined at some length the opinions of Mr. Bright on this subject, as they were expressed by him in his speeches during the abortive effort of 1859, because it was then that he first treated the question of Parliamentary Reform in detail, and because his ideas were as fully developed on the morrow of his election for Birmingham as they were when he aided Mr. Gladstone in shaping the Conservative measure of 1867.





CHAPTER XIX.

HOUSEHOLD SUFFRAGE.

MR. DISRAELI'S "fancy franchise" being rejected, and a dissolution having brought about the return of Lord Palmerston to power, the subject was allowed to fall into the background ; and thus the eloquence of Mr. Bright, and the fervour of the constituencies throughout the country, were for six years without effect. The indifference of the veteran Premier was not, however, endured by the country without protest. The demand for an extension of the suffrage was maintained by many public speakers, and by the more advanced Liberals generally ; and much dissatisfaction was expressed at its continued exclusion from the Ministerial programme. In the House of Commons itself, attempts were made by private members, like Mr. Locke King and Mr. Baines, to push the question to the front. In the session of 1865, Mr. Baines introduced a Bill providing for a reduction of the borough franchise, and secured as many as 214 votes for the second reading. It was on this occasion that Mr. Lowe made a memorable attack on the English democracy, contrasting it most unfavourably with the democracy of the United States. Meanwhile Lord Palmerston steadily set his face against the

agitation, and, as long as he lived, any change in the representative system was seen to be hopeless.

Early in the same year Mr. Bright had made a speech to his constituents, in which he reiterated the popular claims, and answered the arguments of various objectors, both Conservatives and Whigs. He, however, had no more idea than anyone else at this time that the death of the Premier was so soon to remove the chief impediment, and to make Reform the leading question of the day. Before that event occurred, a general election had become necessary by lapse of time, and the addresses of some of the most prominent candidates dealt with the topic as one of vital importance. Mr. J. S. Mill, who stood for Westminster, wrote that he was ready to support measures of reform going far beyond the proposals of Messrs. Locke King and Baines. "I would open the suffrage," he said, "to all grown persons, both men and women, who can read, write, and perform a sum in the rule of three. . . . I should be prepared to support a measure which would give to the labouring classes a clear half of the national representation." Mr. Mill headed the poll at Westminster; and the fact certainly seems to show that a large and popular constituency was not alarmed by this very comprehensive suggestion.

In his address to the electors of Birmingham, Mr. Bright naturally made a special point of Reform. He had been constantly restive under the nerveless policy of Lord Palmerston, and resented very much the abandonment of the question on which he himself had shown the existence of so deep and genuine a sentiment in the constituencies. The lapse of the question had been ascribed to indifference on the part of the constituencies generally; but Mr. Bright would not admit that this was an accurate description of the situation. He now wrote to his constituents that the Administration, "which in 1859 climbed into office under the pretence of its devotion to the question of Parliamentary

Reform," had in office violated its solemn pledges. "Its chiefs have purposely betrayed the cause they undertook to defend, and the less eminent members of it have tamely acquiesced in that betrayal. The Ministry have for six years held office, which, but for promises they made, and which they have broken, they could not have obtained possession of even for a day."

The words were very severe, but scarcely more so than the occasion warranted. Reform had been sacrificed; pledges had been violated; the country had been bamboozled or lulled to sleep by Lord Palmerston's popularity, and by his skilful manipulation of home and foreign politics. This being so, it was impossible that a statesman of Mr. Bright's gravity and earnestness of mind should not have felt a very strong disposition to resent the injustice. Feeling as he did on the subject, and penetrated by a sense of the immeasurable superiority of the popular interests to all considerations of mere convenience and timidity, he could hardly have reconciled it with his conscience to maintain silence at such a moment, or to use soft words under such critical circumstances.

During the contest he returned to the subject more than once. Speaking on the platform on the nomination day, he stigmatised the attitude of Lord Palmerston as "contemptuous silence, in face of the fact that five millions of grown-up men had no representation in a country whose foundation of government was a representative system and the representative principle." As for the Conservative view of the matter, he laughed at Mr. Disraeli's notion of "lateral extension of the franchise." "He says to the great body of working men—to these five million men—It is true you are shut out; the Reform Bill was not satisfactory; the representation may be amended; your complaint is just, and we will admit—somebody else. . . . The 'fancy franchise' has failed. The lateral extension will also fail. We

who advocate honest, open, clearly understood and definite measures—we shall succeed.”

This was a sound prediction, based on principle as well as common sense. Simple as it seems to us in the present day, and inevitable as a downward extension of the franchise actually was, it required the clearness and conviction of a statesman to pursue the object and feel confident of the result, as Mr. Bright had done from the beginning. And nothing is more characteristic of Mr. Bright's political career than the clearness and conviction with which he has at all times held to his deliberately formed opinions. His perspicacity has rarely failed him; and least of all when he set himself to read the character of an opponent. In this very speech, for instance, he referred to Mr. Disraeli in terms which, though not flattering, are remarkably shrewd. “Mr. Disraeli,” he said, “is a man of brains, of genius, of a great capacity of action, of a wonderful tenacity of purpose, and of a rare courage. He would have been a statesman if his powers had been directed by any ennobling principle or idea, but unhappily he prefers a temporary and worthless distinction as the head of a decaying party, fighting for impossible ends, to the priceless memories of services rendered to his country and to freedom, upon which only in our age an enduring fame can be built up.”

The elections gave a majority of about eighty for the Liberals; and with Lord Palmerston again in power, there was of course no better prospect of Reform than ever. But the Premier was already an octogenarian; he had latterly become very infirm, and every one felt that a change was imminent in the constitution of the Government. Palmerston died in October; and on the 6th of the following month Lord John—now Earl—Russell was gazetted First Lord of the Treasury. The new Premier had for many years advocated a supplementary measure of Parliamentary Reform, and had even proposed legislation on the subject in the

House of Commons. If he had been able to influence Palmerston, instead of allowing himself to be overborne by him, a Bill would have been passed long ago; and it would probably have been a weaker Bill than the one eventually carried in 1867. But he had been obliged to give way before the stronger will of his late chief, and thus he had not undeservedly incurred the reproaches which Mr. Bright had levelled upon them both in common.

Now, however, Lord Russell was relieved from his fetters, and it was understood that Parliamentary Reform was to be the principal item in the programme of the Cabinet. Accordingly, when the House met three months later, the Queen's Speech announced that a Bill would be brought in as soon as certain information had been collected on the subject. Five weeks later—that is to say, on the 12th of March—Mr. Gladstone, who now led the House of Commons, introduced the Franchise Extension Bill, in redemption of the pledges which had been given by the Liberal leaders, and by Earl Russell in particular, for more than fifteen years past. “The proposal was not a very bold one. The suffrage was to be given to householders at a rental of £14 or upwards, with or without land, in county constituencies, and to householders of a £7 rental in boroughs; to lodgers paying £10 a-year; to depositors of £50 in savings banks. There was a limitation in this latter class, who were to be depositors of two years standing; and, in obedience to a demand which had been made in some quarters, the labourers employed in the Government dockyards were to be deprived of their votes. It is clear that the reforming zeal of Lord Russell's Ministry was not very great at this moment, or else their courage fell short of their convictions. . . . The majority of the Liberals in the House supported the Government—some with enthusiasm, others, like Mr. Bright and Mr. J. S. Mill, because, if the measure did not go very far, it was simple and honest as far as it went.

There were, however, a few Liberals who at once offered the Bill an active opposition, on the ground that it was a dangerous advance towards democratic institutions. Mr. Lowe was the most powerful debater amongst the malcontents, though Mr. Horsman surpassed him in bitterness and unworthy imputations. It was in rejoinder to the last-named that Mr. Bright (on the motion for leave to bring in the Bill) made use of a famous piece of satire, which introduced a new term into Parliamentary nomenclature. The hon. gentleman, he said, 'had retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, to which he invited every one who was in distress, and every one who was discontented. He has long been anxious to found a party in this House, and there is scarcely a member at this end of the House who is able to address us with effect, whom he has not tried to bring over to his party and his cabal. At last he has succeeded in hooking the right honourable gentleman the member for Calne (Mr. Lowe). I know it was the opinion, many years ago, of a member of the Cabinet, that two men could make a party. When a party is formed of two men so amiable and disinterested as the two right hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious, and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This party of two is like the Scotch terrier, that was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail.' The Cave, however, was destined to hold more than two Liberals. Lord Grosvenor, Mr. Laing, and others went over to the Opposition, and were eventually the cause of bringing a defeat upon the Ministry. The country soon grew excited over the Bill, and some rather vehement things were said on both sides, from public platforms and elsewhere. At a great meeting in Liverpool, held in the course of the session, Mr. Gladstone made special reference to the

hostility of Earl Grosvenor to the Government; and at the time he affirmed their determination to proceed with it at all costs. 'We have passed the Rubicon,' he said, 'we have broken the bridge and burnt the boats behind us. We have advisedly cut off the means of retreat, and having done this, we hope that, as far as time is yet permitted, we have done our duty to the Crown and to the nation.'

"Earl Grosvenor gave notice of an amendment to the second reading, to the effect that it was inexpedient to go on with the consideration of the Bill until the complete scheme for the amendment of the representative system had been placed before the House. To this the Government offered a direct negative; but Mr. Gladstone subsequently undertook to lay corresponding Scotch and Irish Bills on the table, after the second reading had been taken, though it was not intended to proceed with them further in that session. The second reading was moved on the 12th of April; and Earl Grosvenor's amendment was seconded by Lord Stanley. The debate occupied eight nights, a very large number of members on both sides claiming their right to speak. The division took place on the 27th of the month, when Earl Grosvenor's amendment was defeated, and the second reading was carried, though only by the narrow majority of five in a House of 636.

"The intentions of the Government were now so far modified that they determined to bring in a Bill for the Distribution of Seats; and Mr. Gladstone explained this measure on the 7th of May. It was proposed to group together a number of small boroughs, giving each group one or two representatives; and to reduce the representation of eight other boroughs from two to one. In this manner the House would have forty-nine seats at its disposal—adhering to the present total of 658 members; and of these twenty-six were to be given to the largest counties. Seven seats would go to Scotland; an additional member would be

summoned from Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Salford ; the Tower Hamlets would be subdivided, with the addition of two seats ; the borough of Chelsea would be created, with two members ; and seven new boroughs would receive one seat each. This measure, though opposed by Mr. Disraeli, was read a second time without a division. The Bills were thenceforth considered together in Committee. Sir Rainald Knightley, a Conservative, carried an instruction to make provision for the better prevention of bribery and corruption at elections. Several nights were spent over an amendment of Captain Hayter's, which was ultimately withdrawn. After further struggles on the clauses, and some obstruction on repeated motions for the adjournment of the debate, Lord Dunkellin moved an amendment, on the 18th of June, to substitute 'rateable value' for 'clear yearly value,' in the definition of qualifications, and this was carried against the Government by a majority of 315 to 304. Ministers at once resigned, and Lord Derby was charged with the formation of a new Cabinet."*

As is suggested in the passage above quoted, Mr. Bright and some of his political friends supported Lord Russell's Bill as an approximation to their demands, though it did not satisfy their ideas of what was needed by the country. In his speech of the 13th of March, the hon. member for Birmingham set out by saying that he did not rise to defend the Bill, but rather to explain it ; and whilst appealing to the House not to prove, by rejecting the measure, that it was "against all Reform," he declared that the Government's plan was not one which, if he had been consulted by its framers, he should have recommended. "If I had been a Minister," he added, "it is not a Bill which I should have consented to present to the House. I think it is not

* This sketch of the Reform struggle of 1866 is adopted from the *Life of Mr. Gladstone*, in the first volume of the present Series.

adequate to the occasion, and that its concessions are not sufficient. But I know the difficulties under which Ministries labour, and I know the disinclination of Parliament to do much in the direction of this question. I shall give it my support because, as far as it goes, it is a simple and honest measure, and because I believe, if it becomes law, it will give more solidity and duration to everything that is good in the Constitution, and to everything that is noble in the character of the people of these realms."

The Derby-Disraeli Ministry, which succeeded the Ministry of Earl Russell, pledged itself to bring in a Reform Bill of its own, having refused to proceed with the measures introduced by Mr. Gladstone. In the meantime the Reform League maintained the agitation out of doors, and public opinion was very forcibly expressed in favour of immediate legislation. "Meetings were held throughout the country, and speeches were made denouncing those who had taken the most prominent part in rejecting the Bill. At an open-air meeting near Birmingham"—addressed by Mr. Bright and others—"it was estimated that no fewer than a quarter of a million people were assembled together, many coming from considerable distances. At this time Mr. Gladstone displayed the moderation and generosity of his mind by discouraging the more extreme utterances of his followers, and declaring his readiness to consider any well-considered scheme which might be brought forward by his political opponents. Some advanced Liberals took umbrage at this mild style of controversy; and it was not the last occasion on which the Radicals were to wax impatient over the gradual development of their leader's logical mind. The session of 1867 opened on the 5th of February, and the Queen's Speech promised amongst other things that the Government would bring forward a Reform Bill. A few days later Mr. Disraeli explained the scheme of the Cabinet. The limit of the franchise was to be fixed at a £6 rental in

boroughs, and £20 in counties. The suffrage was to be extended to graduates of Universities, to depositors of £50 in the funds or £30 in a savings bank, and to the payers of £20 of direct taxation in the course of one year. There were also to be professional franchises for ministers of religion, doctors, lawyers, and certificated schoolmasters. As for the redistribution of seats, the boroughs of Lancaster, Reigate, Totness, and Yarmouth (where recent corrupt practices had been exposed) were to be disfranchised, and one member was to be taken from each of twenty-three boroughs with less than 7000 inhabitants. Several new boroughs were to be created, fifteen additional seats were to be given to the counties, and one to London University. The total number of voters expected to be added to the register was about the same as had been calculated under the Russell-Gladstone scheme.

“The second reading of the Bill gave rise to a long debate, several times adjourned; and the consideration of the clauses in Committee was more detailed, and even more bitter, than the corresponding discussion in the previous session. There was abundant criticism of the measure from both sides of the House, but the Government was careful to make it understood that the scheme was freely submitted to the wisdom of the Legislature as a whole, that amendments were courted, that objections would be gratefully received, and that the support of the Liberals would be indispensable as a counterpoise to the dissatisfied Conservatives. It must be confessed that Mr. Disraeli had a great deal to endure from his friends, as well as from his professed antagonists. Mr. Beresford Hope proclaimed his determination to vote at all hazards against ‘the Asian mystery,’ thereby bringing down on himself the retort that his ‘Bata-vian graces’ were charming to the mind of his leader. Mr. Lowe was none the more indulgent to the Tory Reform Bill because he had helped to defeat the Liberal measure, and

he paraphrased the language of Ministers by putting into their mouths such words as these:—‘If the House will deign to take us into its counsel, if it will co-operate with us in this matter, we shall receive with cordiality, with deference—nay, even with gratitude—any suggestion it likes to offer. Say what you like to us, only for God’s sake leave us our places!’ Lord Cranborne warned his party against committing political suicide by passing the Bill of his late colleagues.

“Sarcasm and reproof, correction and amendment, poured upon the Ministry from day to day, and were borne with invariable equanimity by the Chancellor and his friends. More than once they were placed in a minority, but as a rule they avoided this by accepting the suggestions of the Opposition leaders or private members. They had proposed in certain cases to give more than one vote to men possessing more than one qualification in the same constituency; but this principle, and the ‘compound householder’ principle, were finally expunged from the Bill. The county franchise was further lowered to £12, and the professional and ‘fancy’ franchises were rejected altogether. A lodger franchise, not included in the Government scheme, was added on the motion of a Liberal member; and an adverse vote limited the qualification by residence to twelve months. Other modifications were made in the redistribution scheme, including the grant of a third vote to Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham. Throughout the discussion the House proved itself to be eminently practical, sound, and conscientious; and it refused to listen to anything like a mere experiment in legislation—such as the female franchise proposed by J. S. Mill, and the system of cumulative vote as recommended by Mr. Lowe.

“The third reading was taken on the 15th of July. Lord Cranborne expressed a very general feeling when he declared that the Bill had been practically dictated to the Government

by Mr. Gladstone, and repudiated the claim which was made for it as a Conservative triumph. It is interesting in the light of subsequent events to note the concluding strictures of the future Marquis of Salisbury on the conduct of the leader with whom he was destined to be so intimately associated. 'I desire to protest,' Lord Cranborne said, 'in the most earnest language I am capable of using, against the political morality on which the manœuvres of this year have been based. If you borrow your political ethics from the ethics of the political adventurer, you may depend upon it the whole of your representative institutions will crumble beneath your feet.' Mr. Lowe spoke in yet more bitter terms of the 'shameful victory' which had been won in the passing of this Bill; but the feeling of the majority of Englishmen was one of satisfaction that a necessary work had been accomplished, and by the agreement of both parties, rather than of 'shame, rage, scorn, indignation, and despair,' as the caustic Adullamite chose to put it. The more sober Conservatives regarded the achievement of Mr. Disraeli as being what Lord Derby called it, 'a leap in the dark.' Perhaps Lord Derby's retirement from the leadership in the following February was a virtual expression of the sentiment engendered in his mind by the 'educational' triumphs of his lieutenants, whom he preferred to leave in sole command of the army which had profited by his discipline."*

Mr. Bright spoke many times during this last struggle for Parliamentary Reform, both in the provinces and in the House of Commons. In the recess of 1866, when the agitation was at its height, and before it was known what kind of a measure Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli would bring in, he addressed not only the monster meeting at Birmingham (August 27), already mentioned, but other

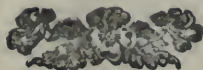
* *Life and Times of W. E. Gladstone.*

large and enthusiastic assemblies at Manchester (September 27), at Glasgow (October 16), at Dublin (October 30), at Manchester again (November 20), and in London (December 4). In the House, his principal speeches were delivered on the 20th of June 1867 — against the proposal of the Government to allow the use of voting-papers—and on the 8th of August, during a debate on the Lords' amendments, when he vigorously but unsuccessfully opposed the minority clause.

The general attitude of Mr. Bright at this stage of his career was firm, bold, and in some sense aggressive. He had nothing of that timidity of character which induces weaker men to shrink at the moment when resolution is needed, or to shift responsibility on to the shoulders of others. In July of the year 1866, when Mr. Walpole's famous prohibition of the Hyde Park meeting had roused the reformers in the metropolis to a high pitch of excitement, he was invited by the Council of the League to accompany them to the place of assembly. In his reply, whilst stating his inability to attend, he wrote:—"You have asserted your right to meet on Primrose Hill and in Trafalgar Square. I hope after Monday night no one will doubt your right to meet in Hyde Park. If a public meeting in a public park is denied you, and if millions of intelligent and honest men are denied the franchise, on what foundation do our liberties rest—or is there in the country any liberty but the toleration of the ruling class? This is a serious question, but it is necessary to ask it, and some answer must be given to it."

A man in Mr. Bright's high position, with a commanding influence in the country, and an honourable ambition to acquire yet more influence in the Councils of the State, would not have written a letter of this kind if he had been disposed to trim his sails for the breezes of official favour. There was true moral courage in his recognition and sanction of the League's proceedings; and one can understand

from such incidents as this how he came by his popular title of "honest John Bright." And we can understand equally well how he had been so extremely unpopular with the Conservatives, and even with the majority of the Whigs. He had always deemed it his duty to speak his mind without fear or dissimulation, and he did so occasionally with scant regard for the opinion of his critics—as when he described the Lords' amendments to the Bill of 1867 as "the offspring and spawn of feeble minds." A politician who speaks in this fashion can never be widely popular, but he may be, as John Bright was, indisputably honest.





CHAPTER XX.

IN THE CABINET.

WHEN Mr. Gladstone's resolutions on the Irish Church had disposed of Mr. Disraeli and his Government, it was felt that the new Premier was doing no more than justice to the member for Birmingham in offering him a place in the Cabinet. There had not hitherto been a close friendship between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright, nor (until the last year) a specially intimate connection in political affairs; but the latter of the two had been steadily increasing his reputation as a politician of weight and prudence, and Mr. Gladstone could not fail to recognise that such a man, apart from any claims which he might be supposed to possess, would be a very valuable ally for him. His remarkable debating power, hardly second to that of the Premier himself, though it was very different in kind, added to the dignity and straightforwardness of his character, recommended him as a tower of strength in any Liberal Ministry, the more especially as he represented the advanced ranks of the party, whose co-operation he secured for the Government. By the majority of Englishmen, indeed—at any rate above the newly-enfranchised artisans—Mr. Bright was still looked upon as an extreme Radical,

and occasionally as a demagogue and an agitator, without a claim or title to office. His entrance into Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet was regarded by these persons with some disfavour ; but the more reasonable admitted that the Reform Act of 1868, by extending the suffrage to the numerous classes whose cause he had so long advocated, had entirely changed the conditions of the Liberal party, and given to the member for Birmingham a distinct right to a place in the Government.

There were some who went a step further, and contended that Mr. Bright had received less than his deserts in being made President of the Board of Trade—an office implying more of hard work than of dignity and emolument. Mr. Bright himself, however, was satisfied with his position in the Administration, even if he had not personally selected his department. To be a member of the Cabinet which was raised to power by the enfranchised householders, with a programme of reforms so wide and thorough, and under a leader capable of inspiring so much enthusiasm as Mr. Gladstone, was a fitting reward for his great and disinterested labour, and must have been peculiarly gratifying to one who had often incurred odium and obloquy by his advocacy of unpopular measures. No honours which the State has to offer could be appreciated more highly than a seat in such a Cabinet ; and least of all could Mr. Bright have been tempted to prefer any other recognition of his services—whether title, place, or pension. The best thing he could have hoped for was the opportunity of working in the front ranks of the party which was to perfect the new electoral system, to bestow religious equality and an instalment of land-law reform on Ireland, and to establish national education on a firm and broad basis. This privilege was given to him ; and from that moment, accordingly, John Bright may be considered as having entered upon the final and triumphant stage of his distinguished political career.

Meanwhile there had been ample evidence that in the country at large, as well as in official circles and amongst the Liberal party leaders, Mr. Bright had greatly improved his position before the general public by the effectual manner in which he had pleaded the cause of the unenfranchised masses during ten years, by his lofty eloquence and his irreproachable life. The tone of the public press, in writing of his actions or speeches, had become notably more just and free from prejudice; and it was the same with private individuals and with public speakers. Birmingham continued to elect him to Parliament; and other large towns conferred on him either their freedom or a popular reception equally flattering. Dublin had thus honoured him in 1867; Manchester and Glasgow had received him with an ovation. In 1868, between the dissolution and the General Election, he was presented with the freedom of the city of Edinburgh; and on this occasion he delivered a speech, partly of reminiscence and partly of aspiration for the future. He eulogised Cobden—whose death two years before had elicited from him in the House of Commons a few touching words of affection and respect—and he referred to the Free Trade movement and the Russian War. As for the future, he declared his opinion that the nineteenth century would be a century remarkable for its changes. There was a great battle, he said, going on at that moment—a battle with “confused noise” throughout the country. “All over Great Britain and over Ireland men were discussing great questions—questions which are to affect the unity of the empire, our own condition, the condition of the posterity that are to follow us.” In this battle the speaker urged his hearers to avoid the heat of passion, to strip from the questions of the day all that did not belong to them, and to seek honestly for a true solution of whatever difficulties beset the nation.

The earnestness of the appeal seemed to suggest that the

heat of controversy which had so often characterised Mr. Bright's speeches was ready to die out in his breast—that he had reached a level on which the aggressive mood was less indispensable, and the mood of conciliation commended itself to the veteran's mind.

During this November visit to Edinburgh, John Bright was made an honorary member of the Chamber of Commerce; and he drew some attention to his speech in the country at large by recommending his audience to strive for a "free breakfast table." The abolition of the Corn Laws, and the adoption of a Free Trade policy in general, would, he thought, be reasonably capped by the abolition of the duties on the few remaining articles of food which are subject to taxation, such as tea, coffee, and sugar. In the evening he was presented with an address, and in acknowledging it spoke of the increase of pauperism in the country, which he held to be incompatible with the prosperity of the nation. "You may have an ancient monarchy," he said, "with the dazzling glitter of the sovereign; and you may have an ancient nobility, with grand mansions and parks, and great estates; and you may have an ecclesiastical hierarchy, covering with worldly pomp that religion whose virtue is humility; but, notwithstanding all this, the whole fabric is rotten, and doomed ultimately to fall; for the great mass of the people by whom it is supported is poor, and suffering, and degraded. What is there that man cannot do if he tries? The other day he descended into the mysterious depths of the ocean, and with an iron hand he sought, and he found, and he grasped, and he brought to the surface, the lost cable, and with it he made two worlds one. I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down to moral depths even deeper than the cable fathoms, to bring up from thence Misery's sons and daughters, and the multi-

tude who are ready to perish? This is the great problem which is now before us. It is not one for statesmen only—it is not one for preachers of the Gospel only. It is one for every man in the nation to attempt to solve. The nation is now in power, and, if wisdom abide with power, the generation to follow may behold the glorious day of which we, in our time, with our best endeavours, can only hope to see the earliest dawn.”

This luminously eloquent passage—a Jeremiad relieved with noble faith in the future—reveals the genuine philanthropist, as well as the far-seeing statesman. With Mr. Bright, the possession of political power by each individual in the nation is desirable chiefly in order that he may raise himself in the scale of prosperity, personal wellbeing, and consideration. The Parliamentary vote is a lever for the attainment of happiness; the Act of 1868 had put this lever into the hands of a large body of suffering men, who, sooner or later, would be able to use it for their own redemption. It was a doctrine of manliness and independence which Mr. Bright expounded; and it may be observed in passing that, whilst, as he said, the pauperism of the country was rising higher and higher at the time when he spoke, it had passed its crisis and notably decreased before the first reformed Parliament had come to an end.

John Bright became a Cabinet Minister in the last month of 1868. On the 9th of December he attended a Privy Council with his colleagues, was sworn in as a Councillor (with the title of Right Honourable), and received the seals of office. His acceptance of the position of President of the Board of Trade vacated his seat for Birmingham, and on the 21st of the month he solicited re-election. The personal explanations which he made on this occasion were of a very interesting kind, and reflected the utmost credit on him. There were circumstances which had rendered his introduction into the Cabinet peculiarly gratifying, and amongst

these he did not scruple to mention the fact that Mr. Gladstone had invited his co-operation "with the cordial and gracious acquiescence of Her Majesty the Queen." It was a pardonable pride with which he referred to this fact; and at the same time he vindicated his independence of mind and action. He had never aspired, he said, to the rank of Privy Councillor or the dignity of a Cabinet office; he would have preferred to remain in the common rank of the simple citizenship in which he had hitherto lived. "There is a charming story contained in a single verse of the Old Testament which has often struck me as one of great beauty. Many of you will recollect that the prophet, in journeying to and fro, was very hospitably entertained by what is termed in the Bible a Shunamite woman. In return for the hospitality of his entertainment he wished to make her some amends, and he called her and asked her what there was that he should do for her. 'Shall I speak for thee to the King, or to the Captain of the Host?'—and it has always appeared to me to be a great answer that the Shunamite woman returned. She said, 'I dwell among mine own people.' When the question was put to me whether I would step into the position in which I now find myself, the answer from my heart was the same—I wish to dwell among mine own people. Happily the time may have come—I trust it has come—when in this country an honest man may enter the service of the Crown, and at the same time may not feel it in any degree necessary to dissociate himself from his own people."

And again, foreseeing the necessity of occasionally taking a course, in conjunction with his colleagues, which might appear to some people to be out of harmony with his former professions, he said:—"If there should be any such occasions—if any one of my constituents should find that I have on any occasion to come been in a lobby different to that in which at some former period I have been found, let him

have such patience as he can ; let him understand this, that until I say I have changed my views, my views remain unchanged ; and that the different course which I am compelled to take is one which does not affect principle so much as time and opportunity, or that it is a temporary and inevitable concession to the necessity of continuing harmony of discussion amongst the members of the Government. I must ask you to look always at the general result."

Mr. Bright has justified this demand upon the confidence of his constituents, his friends, and the public. He has been as consistent, in great matters and small, as it was possible for a Cabinet Minister to be ; and his inconsistencies have never touched a question of principle. He has been in office what he was in Opposition, or below the gangway—a Quaker politician, a professed advocate of the poorest and the unrepresented classes, a member of the Peace Party—one of his "own people" in every respect. He has, of course, spoken less frequently on controversial topics, when the Liberals have been in power, unless it were to defend a Government measure ; but his silence has not implied a change of views on any of the great problems which had interested him as a private member.

In this also he has afforded an admirable instance of the manly and honest independence which may be asserted by a statesmen who, professing distinct and sometimes unpopular opinions, has the moral courage to adhere to them through every phase of his career.

Mr. Gladstone had offered his colleague the important position of the head of the India Office. This Mr. Bright was compelled to decline on account of his precarious health.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST GLADSTONE ADMINISTRATION.

BETWEEN the end of 1868, when he entered the Cabinet, and the end of 1870, when illness compelled him to withdraw from it, Mr. Bright devoted himself in part to the work of the Board of Trade, and in part to the more general duties which fall upon a Cabinet Minister. One element in the understanding upon which he had accepted his position as a Minister was that the passing of a Ballot Act should be amongst the first cares of the Government. There had been no need for him to stipulate this. The party as a whole was quite ready for the adoption of a system of secret voting, as being necessary for the protection of weak voters, and a natural complement of the enfranchisement of householders. Hardly one of Mr. Bright's colleagues felt a grain of hesitation in acceding to the Premier's suggestion in this matter, and the member for Birmingham had been able to inform his constituents at the time of his re-election that the long-contested point had been gained at last.

The programme of the Liberal Government of 1868 included, in addition to the Ballot, an array of measures which were justly looked upon as of the highest value to

the country. The scheme for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church was chief amongst these. It had been offered to and accepted by the country at the end of the preceding session, when Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions evoked such a hearty response both in Parliament and in the constituencies. It became manifest at this time that the general opinion of Englishmen and Scotchmen was ripe for the change, in spite of the angry protests and denunciations of a certain number of Churchmen. Liberals in particular were enthusiastic at the prospect of applying a remedy to the grievances of Ireland—first in regard to the Church, and next in regard to the land laws and popular education.

These questions, as we have seen in a previous chapter, were not new to Mr. Bright. He had long ago made a careful study of the condition of Ireland, and had both understood and sympathised in the complaints of the people. Fifteen or twenty years before he had made up his mind that the justice of the case required a modification of the land system, and an equitable distribution of the funds of the Establishment. In 1852 he wrote a letter on the Irish Church to Dr. Gray, of the *Freeman's Journal*, in which he suggested the realisation of the property of the Church, its devolution into the hands of a Commission, and "the appropriation of certain portions of this fund as a free gift to each of the three Churches in Ireland." The remainder might, and in his opinion ought to "be reserved for purposes strictly Irish, and directed to the educational and moral improvement of the people, without respect to class or creed."

It was precisely on these principles that Mr. Gladstone, in 1869, proposed to deal with the Irish Establishment and its enormous funds. No doubt he owed to Mr. Bright himself more than one of the ideas on which he now acted.

In the letter referred to, speaking of the suggestion that

one part of the Church revenues should be given to the Catholics, Mr. Bright said :—“I will ask any man with a head to comprehend and a heart to feel, to read the history of Ireland, not from the time of Henry VIII., but from the accession of William III. ; and if he insists upon a settlement of this question by grants to the Protestant sects, and by the refusal of any corresponding grant to the Roman Catholics, I can only say that his statesmanship is as wanting in wisdom as his Protestantism lacks the spirit of Christianity. If, for generations, a portion of the Protestants of Ireland, few in number but possessing much wealth, have enjoyed the large ecclesiastical revenues of a whole kingdom ; and if, during the same period, the Roman Catholics, the bulk of the population, but possessing little wealth, have been thrown entirely on their own limited resources, and under circumstances of political and social inferiority, can it be possible, when an attempt shall be made to remedy some of the manifold injustice of past times, that any Englishman or any Scotchman will be found to complain of the impartiality of the Government, and, in his zeal for Protestantism, to forget the simple obligations of justice ?”

And again, with respect to the mutual relations of the Churches in Ireland, the writer made certain observations which were not merely conceived in the loftiest spirit, but were singularly applicable to the crisis which occurred just sixteen years after the letter was first printed. Believing that true statesmanship consisted in adapting institutions to the wants of nations, and not simply in preserving them, Mr. Bright declared his conviction that it was possible so to adapt the institutions of Ireland to the wants and circumstances of Ireland that her people might become as content as the people of England and Scotland are with the mild monarchy under which we live. “Some experience and much reflection have convinced me that all efforts on behalf

of industry and peace in Ireland will be in great part un-availing until we eradicate the sentiment which is universal among her Catholic population—that the Imperial Government is partial, and that to belong to the Roman Catholic Church is to incur the suspicion or the hostility of the law. A true ‘equality’ established among the Irish sects would put an end to this pernicious but all-pervading sentiment; and Catholics, whether priests or laymen, would feel that the last link of the fetters was at length broken. Supremacy on the one hand, and a degrading inferiority on the other, would be abolished, and the whole atmosphere of Irish social and political life would be purified. Then, too, Christianity would appeal to the population, not as a persecuting or persecuted faith, with her features disfigured by the violence of political conflict, but radiant with the divine beauty which belongs to her, and speaking with irresistible force to the hearts and consciences of men. I know not if the statesman be among us who is destined to settle this great question, but whoever he may be, he will strengthen the monarchy, earn the gratitude of three kingdoms, and build up for himself a lasting renown. . . . It is under a solemn sense of duty to my country, and to the interests of justice and religion, that I have ventured to write. I have endeavoured to divest myself of all feeling of preference for, or hostility to, any of the churches or sects in Ireland, and to form my judgment in this matter upon principles admitted by all true statesmanship, and based on the foundations of Christian justice. If I should succeed in directing the attention of any portion of those most deeply interested to some mode of escape from the difficulties with which this question is surrounded, I shall willingly submit to the suspicions or condemnation of those who cannot concur with me in opinion.”

The suspicions and denunciations were not wanting; and Mr. Bright had to wait sixteen years for the consummation

of which he wrote. In 1868, and not before, the statesman whom he indicated in this passage came to the front, and John Bright himself was one of his chosen colleagues in the work. But assuredly it is no uncertain symptom of genuine statesmanship to find this clear enunciation of just principles made so many years before they were adopted by the official leaders of the party of progress and reform.

The debate on the second reading of the Irish Church Bill (which was carried by a majority of 118) was distinguished by a number of very interesting speeches, including one full of humour and epigram by Mr. Disraeli—one of sincere repudiation by the Liberal Sir Roundell Palmer (afterwards Lord Selborne)—one of argumentative vigour against the Bill by Dr. Ball—and one of severe denunciation by Mr. Walpole. All these were adverse to the Government scheme, which on the other hand was defended by Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone. The speech of the former, on the second night of the debate, was remarkable in parts for the religious earnestness of the orator, who spoke in the vein which used to vex the secular mood of Lord Palmerston, with many references to the Scriptures, and to the spirit of a genuine Christianity. There are references of this kind in more than a few of Mr. Bright's addresses; and the character of his oratory is frequently tinged with religious sentiment.

With respect to the application of the Church funds, Mr. Bright pointed out that the charitable nature of the purposes to which it was intended to devote them ought to satisfy all who looked upon the money as sacred; for he trusted that it was "not far from Christianity to charity." "Do you think," he asked the House, "that it will be a misappropriation of the surplus funds of this great transaction to apply them to some objects such as those described in the Bill? Don't you think that such charitable dealing will be better than continuing to maintain by these vast

funds three times the number of clergymen that can be of the slightest use to the Church with which they are now connected? We can do little, it is true. We cannot re-illuminate the extinguished lamp of reason; we cannot make the deaf to hear; we cannot make the dumb to speak; it is not given to us,

‘From the thick film to purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeballs pour the day,’

but at least we can lessen the load of affliction, and we can make life more tolerable to vast numbers who suffer.”

This was in reference to the provisions of the Bill which devoted a portion of the Church Surplus—£8,300,000 out of £16,000,000—to the use of the blind, deaf and dumb, and to various charities and lunatic asylums, “for the relief of unavoidable calamity and suffering.” Parliament has made several other grants and applications from the Surplus in succeeding years.

Mr. Bright wound up his speech in these terms:—“Sir, when I look at this great measure—and I can assure the House that I have looked at it much more than the majority of members, because I have seen it grow from line to line, and from clause to clause, and have watched its growth and its completion with a great and increasing interest—I say, when I look at this measure, I look at it as tending to a more true and solid union between Ireland and Great Britain. I see it giving tranquillity to our people.” Here there was laughter from the Opposition, who were doubtless tickled by the incongruity of Mr. Bright’s anticipations with the gloomy forecasts in which they, and the threatened ecclesiastics, had been indulging ever since the Bill was introduced. “When you have a better remedy,” the speaker continued, “I at least will fairly consider it. I say I see tranquillity given to our people, greater strength to the realm, and new lustre and new dignity added to the Crown. I dare claim for this Bill the support of all thoughtful and

good people within the bounds of the British empire ; and I cannot doubt that it will be accompanied by the blessing of the Supreme in its beneficent results ; for I believe it to be founded upon those principles of justice and of mercy which are the glorious attributes of His eternal reign."

In the meantime, although the Church Bill was carried, as was also the Land Bill of the succeeding session, by large majorities of the House of Commons, the task of the Government in Ireland was exceedingly difficult. Fenianism was still rampant, outrages were frequent, and the most disloyal language was used by prominent men in public places. It required faith and a sanguine temperament to believe in the adequacy of the Government measures for the pacification of the country. The result showed, after a few years, that the remedial legislation of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet had satisfied only the most moderate sections of the people. Ten years later it was to be made manifest that yet more drastic measures were necessary to allay the discontent of the nation.

In connection with the Irish questions of 1869 and 1870, Mr. Bright got himself into trouble by the very frank and outspoken way in which he dealt with the subject in Parliament. Lord Claud Hamilton called attention to a letter written in the year 1866, which he described as "countenancing Fenianism," and further charged the President of the Board of Trade with attending a demonstration in Dublin, with jesting at the Fenian raid on Chester Castle, and with displaying sympathy towards one of the authors of the Clerkenwell explosion. In reply, Mr. Bright adhered to all he had previously said, and went on to express his personal feelings in the matter, when he might have done much better by a dignified silence. The condition of things in Ireland, he declared, during the past two hundred years—and even during the past fifty years—would have been utterly impossible if Ireland had been separate from England.

"If Ireland were unmoored from her fastenings in the deep, and floated two thousand miles to the westward, those things that we propose to do, and which in all probability may be offered to the House in the next session, would have been done by the people of Ireland themselves, and if they had become a State of the American Republic under the condition of that country, those things would have been done. The time has come when Acts of constant repression in Ireland are unjust and evil, and when no more Acts of repression should ever pass this House, unless attended with Acts of a remedial and consoling nature."

Once again Mr. Bright proclaimed himself in advance of his age. That which he stated in 1869, and which was then condemned as an indiscretion, became the sober truth and common-place of 1880. He had to apologise for overstepping the limit of customary reticence. "I made the mistake," he said to Lord Granville—as mentioned by the latter in the House of Lords, on a complaint preferred by the Marquis of Salisbury—"of not prefacing what I had to say by stating that, if I were left to myself I should say so and so." There were some who thought that his remarks had been thoroughly salutary and well timed, and that his apology only proved that his personal influence and authority were lessened by his presence in the Cabinet.

As usual in the case of Bills introduced by Liberal Governments, which are not acceptable to the Conservative party, there was curiosity as to the manner in which the House of Lords, with its Conservative majority, would see fit to treat the Irish Church Bill. In a letter to the promoters of a meeting at Birmingham in support of the measure, Mr. Bright referred in a caustic mood to the attitude of the Lords. If, he said, they should delay the passing of the Bill, they would "stimulate discussion on important questions which, but for their infatuation, might have slumbered for years." He recommended them to bring

themselves "on a line with the opinions and necessities of the day." In harmony with the nation they might go on for a long time ; but throwing themselves athwart its course they might encounter accidents no pleasant for them to think of. This utterance also was animadverted on in the House of Lords, as well as in the Commons ; but, as the Ministers questioned very reasonably said, the language was not more severe than that which had been used by many members of the Opposition when criticising the Bill.

The Church Bill was passed, and in the following year the Irish Land Bill was brought forward as the second chapter of remedial legislation for the sister kingdom. Here again Mr. Bright was an energetic and indefatigable ally to the Prime Minister. He gave his support to the principles of the measure in and out of Parliament, preparing the way for it even before it had been proposed in the House. In January 1870, addressing his constituents at Birmingham, and referring in advance to the scheme which had been discussed in the Cabinet, he observed that the Liberal Government proposed "a new conquest of Ireland, without confiscation and without blood, with only the holy weapon of a frank and a generous justice which is everywhere potent to bring together nations long separated by oppression and neglect." "If," he said, "we are able to suppress conspiracy, if we are able to banish agrarian crime, if we can unbar the prison doors, if we can reduce all excess of military force, if we can make Ireland as tranquil as England and Scotland now are, then, at least, I think we may have done something to justify the wisdom and statesmanship of our time."

The Bill became law, but it had not the good effect which its most sanguine friends had hoped from it. A short experience was enough to show that the Land Act of 1870 would need to be supplemented before long by another and more comprehensive Act, if satisfaction was to be given

to the Irish people. This further extension of an admitted principle was made in 1881, by a Cabinet practically identical with that of 1870—containing at all events five of the most influential members. Mr. Bright may have expected too much from the earlier Act, but it must be granted that his work and that of his captain was undertaken in the right spirit, and that it was as thorough in its character as the men of that generation would sanction.

On one question relating to the condition of Ireland Mr. Bright took a firm stand, in common with his colleagues in the Cabinet. Constant demands were made by Irishmen, as well as by many English Radicals, for the release of the Fenian prisoners, and most of the prominent Ministers had been vainly appealed to on this subject. A deputation waited on Mr. Bright for the same purpose, in the first month of 1870; but he could give them no satisfaction. He reminded them that he had always advocated changes in the mode of governing Ireland; but he considered those who used violent means of promoting political ends as the worst of public enemies. In particular, he could make no allowance whatever for the Irishmen who, having emigrated to England, had broken the peace there also. He and his colleagues would willingly open the prison doors to the few Fenians still under detention; but they must consult the safety of the country, and take into consideration the general state of public opinion on the subject. "The Government cannot go before, and it ought not to lag behind public opinion."

Mr. Bright was a good deal criticised by some of his extreme admirers for what they considered a lack of moral courage on this point; and he offended many others by declining to recommend Mr. Odger in his candidature for the borough of Southwark—on the ground that his return would tend to the encouragement of class representation in an inconvenient form. But on the whole he stood the test

of office to the satisfaction of all his friends, and was held to have earned no mean share of the credit attaching to the "heroic legislation" of 1868-71.

On the 19th of December 1870, Mr. Bright, who had begun to suffer from a return of his distressing illness of 1867, retired from the Cabinet, and withdrew for a time from public life. He had taken part in framing the Education Bill, being in some sense a link between the Government and the Birmingham advocates of national, compulsory, and unsectarian education; but he can have had little to do with the subsequent measures of the Gladstone Administration. On the 28th of September 1873, he was once more invited by Mr. Gladstone to enter his Cabinet; and he undertook the position—almost a sinecure—of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. But by this time the work of that famous Cabinet was virtually completed. Mr. Gladstone appealed to the country in the following January, and the Liberals were banished from office for the next six years.





CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRIUMPH OF ARBITRATION.

IN his temporary retirement during the latter part of 1870, and the three succeeding years, Mr. Bright witnessed many acts and occurrences in which he must have taken the deepest concern. In the various steps by which the Liberal Cabinet lost its popularity in the country, and even its influence with the party, he was divided between approbation and disapprobation of the policy of his late colleagues. As for the Education Bill, passed in 1870, he was decidedly adverse to the measure; and when his resignation was announced there were some who concluded at once that it had been partly brought about by this disagreement of opinion. In the matter of foreign policy, especially as regards the acquiescence in Russia's repudiation of the Black Sea clause of the Treaty of Paris, and the Geneva Arbitration, he was heartily with the Government; but, on the other hand, he must have had considerable misgivings about the expedition to Ashantee. The efforts of the Ministry to retrench the public expenditure commanded his warm approbation; and so did the licensing of public houses, the abolition of purchase in the army, and the Ballot Act.

Being out of office, of course his public utterances were characterised by greater freedom than in 1869 and 1870. Thus, early in the year 1873, writing to excuse himself from formally addressing his constituents, he referred to several subjects which demanded the attention of Parliament, though he admitted that they were too large to be undertaken in the last years of a Parliament. These were questions of Reform and Retrenchment—such as the amendment of county representation and of the land laws, which he described as “questions of the immediate future.” Of the question of retrenchment in general, he said:—“If the present Government is unable to grapple with it, it should only show us how great are the interests which oppose themselves to economy, and how much an earnest public opinion is wanted to arrest the extravagant and scandalous expenditure which every statesman in turn condemns, and which not one of them seems able to diminish.”

There is in this sentence a note of discouragement and dissatisfaction, which were doubtless present in the mind of the “Tribune of the People” at this period of his career.

On the subject of national education he was yet more outspoken, even after his re-admission into the Cabinet. Addressing his constituents on his re-election in 1879, less than a month after he had succeeded Mr. Childers in the Chancellorship of the Duchy, he flatly condemned the Act of 1870 for perpetuating instead of entirely superseding the denominational system. He would have established School Boards in every parish, as a matter of course, and withdrawn all State aid from the denominational schools. These schools, he observed, were a part of the parochial organisation of the Church, and to continue the subvention to them was unjust to the Nonconformists, who were naturally and justly aggrieved. This was assuredly a very significant speech, coming from a newly-appointed Cabinet Minister; but its effect must have been to re-assure the minds of the

Dissenters, who had latterly shown much coolness towards the Ministry of Mr. Gladstone, and especially towards Mr. Forster.

Such an effect was doubtless contemplated by Mr. Bright, who can have had no desire to pass a condemnation on his colleagues at that crisis in their fortunes, when their enemies were constantly speaking of their dissensions amongst themselves. And at the same time he made an effective onslaught upon the expectant and tentative policy of the Opposition, and spoke with his old eloquence and fervour concerning the progressive policy of the Reformers. The history of the last forty years, he said, was mainly a history of the conquests of freedom. "It will be a grand volume that tells the story, and your name and mine, if I mistake not, will be found on some of its pages. For me, the final chapter is now writing. It may be already written. But for you, this great constituency, there is a perpetual youth and a perpetual future. I pray Heaven that in the years to come, and when my voice is hushed, you may be granted strength and moderation and wisdom to influence the councils of your country by righteous means to none other than to noble and to righteous ends."

Precisely seven years from that date two Englishmen, both members for Birmingham, and both Cabinet Ministers, were standing boldly side by side, as was alleged, in resistance to several of their colleagues, protesting against the adoption of a policy of repression in Ireland. We need not go into the question whether Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain were altogether wise in their policy in the Autumn of 1880; but they were undoubtedly, from their own point of view, and from that of their constituency, influencing the councils of their country by righteous means to righteous ends.

The Geneva Arbitration, which put an end to the disputes between Great Britain and the United States on the

Alabama claims, took place in 1873, when Mr. Bright was not a member of the Cabinet ; but this triumph of the international principle calls for some detailed notice in a volume dealing with the political career of the leader of the Peace Party. It was unmistakeably an outcome of the long agitations for peaceable methods in the settlement of disputes between nations, and was in that sense a result of the labours and arguments of John Bright and his friends.

The Alabama claims had been urged by the United States from the date of their origination during the Civil War ; and in the first instance, as we saw in a previous chapter, the English Government were unwilling to entertain them in any form. In 1865 the Washington Government pressed us to assent to arbitration ; but Lord John Russell would not hear of it. He, however, proposed a Joint Commission (declined by the States) to settle the respective claims of both countries, excluding those which arose from the depredations of the "Alabama" and other English-built Confederate vessels on the Northern shipping. Under the Government of Lord Derby a similar policy was pursued. One of the grievances of the United States was that England had prematurely recognised the Confederates as belligerents, thereby greatly encouraging them in their rebellion ; but Lord Stanley, in a debate in March 1868, clearly showed that the Washington Government had itself admitted the existence of civil war in America before England recognised it as a fact. It was probably the breadth and vagueness of the American demands which caused the very long delay of England in agreeing to arbitration. In the year just named, Mr. Reverdy Johnson was American Minister in London, and he displayed such a conciliatory disposition that the bases of a treaty were agreed upon, and it was thought that the difficulty had been arranged. The Government of Mr. Disraeli consented to submit the matter in dispute to a Commission, and, by way

of appeal from them, to the arbitration of "some sovereign or head of a friendly State."

The American Senate, however, appeared to think that Mr. Johnson had been too conciliatory, and it refused to ratify the convention signed by him and Lord Clarendon. Thus the whole difficulty remained open for another three or four years. Mr. Gladstone's Government concluded a somewhat similar agreement with the United States, and a High Joint Commission sat at New York for the purpose of drawing up a treaty. The result of their labours was to provide for the appointment of two Boards of Arbitration, one of which should consider the claims arising out of the acts of the "Alabama" and other Confederate cruisers, and decide them on the principle of responsibility for depredations where a Government had not exercised adequate precaution to prevent the building and equipment of privateers; whilst the other Board was to decide the miscellaneous claims on both sides. A third arbitration, in the San Juan boundary dispute, was agreed to at the same time, the Emperor of Brazil being selected as arbitrator.

The Court for the decision of the Alabama claims met at Geneva in April 1872. An attempt was made by the United States to refer what were known as the "indirect claims" to the Court, but the English Government resisted this demand, which was withdrawn. The award of the Court was issued on the 14th of September, the five arbitrators unanimously declaring Great Britain to be liable for the depredations of the "Alabama," and a majority declaring her liable for those of the "Florida" and "Shenandoah." They rejected the claim of the United States to recover the expenditure incurred in pursuit of the cruisers; but they allowed interest on the damages proved, thus bringing up the total award to £3,239,166, 13s. 4d.—a little more than one-third of the amount claimed by the United States.

The English arbitrator, Lord Chief-Justice Cockburn, dissented from the award, and stated his reasons for doing so in a wordy document, which amongst other things sought to justify the moral support given to the South by Englishmen. He had assented to the clause finding England liable for the Alabama claims, but protested against the allowance of interest on the amount of damages. As Mr. Lowe (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) justly said, at a public meeting at Glasgow, it was a pity that Sir Alexander Cockburn did not confine himself to the protests which he had made at Geneva, in the course of the discussion; for "when the thing is decided, and when we are bound to act upon it, and when we are not really justified by any feeling of honour or good faith in making any reclamation or quarrel at all with what has been done," it was not reasonable to stir up the contentions on which the arbitrators had already decided.

The Lord Chief-Justice's protest gave comfort to those who thought that it was a disgrace for England to pay so much money to the United States, when she might have refused to pay any at all; but intelligent public opinion, amongst Conservatives as well as Liberals, agreed that the result of the arbitration was a misfortune for us rather than a disgrace, and that the honourable settlement of this old dispute was cheaply bought for the three millions and a-quarter in which we were mulcted. The friends of international arbitration as an alternative system to war were of course delighted with such a notable instance of moral courage on the part of the Government, and predicted that the good effects of the proceeding would be great and enduring. In this forecast they were altogether justified by events. Good feeling was instantly restored between England and the States; the papers on either side, which had been excessively bitter against each other for many years, became from that moment mutually complaisant, and

to this day the friendly attitude of the two Governments has been maintained without interruption.

The arbitration in this and the San Juan case (which also went against us) had a notable result in the following year, when a motion in the House of Commons by Mr. Henry Richard—the Secretary of the Peace Society—for an address to the Crown in favour of “a general and permanent system of international arbitration” was carried against the Government. Mr. Richard was supported, either in speech or with votes, by ninety-eight members against eighty-eight, the majority including Mr. Bright and his brother, Messrs. Dodson, Fawcett, Henry James, Mundella, and other prominent Ministerialists, as well as by a number of Conservatives. In his speech on this occasion, Mr. Richard pronounced what may fairly be called the national judgment on the Geneva Arbitration of the preceding year; and the passage may be cited as showing the point which had been reached in one of the parallel movements of “Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform.”

Mr. Richard described the Arbitration as a transaction eminently honourable to the spirit of the age, and especially to the two nations principally concerned in it; and he foretold that, in spite of the irritation which had for the moment ruffled the temper of a few of our countrymen, it would be regarded hereafter as constituting a landmark in the history of civilisation. “No doubt some mistakes were made in connection with this great work of international peace, and there is no wonder, considering that the proceeding was somewhat an untried and unwonted one. But are there no mistakes made in connection with international war?—unless, indeed, the right thing to say is that the whole of that bloody business is one huge and monstrous mistake. No doubt some portions of the Treaty of Washington might have been expressed in language less ambiguous and more precise. No doubt the Three Rules

themselves were somewhat vague, though I question if there is any form of words which human ingenuity could devise, upon which clever and practised lawyers could not put two or three constructions if it suited their purpose to do so. No doubt the interpretation put upon those Rules by some of the distinguished men who acted as adjudicators at Geneva was of rather dangerous latitude. No doubt there were still graver errors on both sides, which I forbear to refer to lest they revive feelings that had better be let sleep. But after all these deductions are made, the fact, the signal, the glorious fact remains, that these two great kindred and Christian nations, each of them with abundance of pride and self-assertion . . . were content to lay aside their prejudices and passions, and allow their case to be referred to the arbitration of reason and justice, instead of running the risk of having to refer it at any future time to the blind and brutal arbitrament of the sword."

So far as the Great Powers of Europe are concerned, Arbitration in the strict sense of the term has won no triumphs since 1872. The cognate method of international concert has had its victories, and courts of the nations have sat to hold the balance between disputing countries; but it is impossible to say that the time has arrived when the settlement of quarrels by arbitration will be regarded as natural and a matter of course.





CHAPTER XXIII

THE RUSSIAN BUGBEAR.

MR. BRIGHT shared in the unpopularity and the downfall of the Liberal Ministry in February 1874. He was, indeed, by no means prepared to admit that the punishment inflicted on Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues was deserved, although, as we have seen, he quite comprehended the reason which made some Nonconformists, amongst other Liberals, abstain from voting. Referring at Birmingham to the charge that the Government had disturbed classes and interests without necessity, that they had "harassed almost all sorts of people, and made themselves very unpopular thereby," he declared that this was quite true. "They had disturbed a good many classes and a good many interests;" and in doing so they had had this justification, that "in no single case had they injured a class or interest, and in every case they had greatly benefited the country." As for the men who charged them with disturbance, he exclaimed—"Why, if they had been in the wilderness, no doubt they would have condemned the Ten Commandments as a harassing piece of legislation."

Of course the Liberal members were returned for Birmingham, and most of the Administration retained their seats;

but in the country at large the mischief was done, for the reaction had set in long before. Mr. Gladstone has been blamed for dissolving in too sudden a manner; but it seems improbable that he should have lost a single vote in this way. The elections of the previous year has been more than enough to show that the confidence displayed by the Liberal party in 1868 was at an end, and that there was no longer enough cohesion amongst the various sections of the party to fight a successful battle.

There have been fifty explanations of this remarkable phenomenon; and perhaps the most reasonable of all is this—that a large number of Radicals, including the Nonconformists, held aloof in 1874 because they were not satisfied with the policy of the Government, which was in several senses not sufficiently thorough for them. Of course there had been accessions to the Conservative party by the representatives of “disturbed interests;” but these would not have sufficed to over-balance the normal increase of the Liberals if there had been no abstentions amongst them.

Mr. Bright loyally did his best for the chief to whose standard he had rallied; but he could not stem the tide of unpopularity, and he passed for a time into comparative obscurity with Mr. Gladstone, the Marquis of Hartington, and their colleagues. The facts of his public career during the next few years are meagre; and there is no need for us to dwell upon the circumstances of the time.

When Lord Beaconsfield began to develop his “Imperialist” policy, and our relations with Russia began to be strained, Mr. Bright took occasion at Llandudno,* in

* When introducing himself to this meeting Mr. Bright mentioned certain facts relating to his connection with the little Welsh watering-place, which have a special personal interest. “I am not,” he said, “as you know, what you call a resident of Llandudno, but I have been here almost every year for nearly twenty years past, and I felt that I had something like a special interest in the people among whom I had

November 1876, to raise a timely protest on the subject of war in general, and of the Eastern Question. There could be no doubt as to the line which the speaker would take on the subject. His old feelings at the outbreak of the Crimean War revived in his heart ; he pointed back to the experience of 1854 and the following years, and showed the danger and the folly of cherishing unfounded suspicions of Russia. The parallel was undoubtedly a very close one. It was said now, as it was said then, that Russia was aggressive, and that Russia intended to conquer Turkey and capture and hold Constantinople, and to dominate alike over Europe and over Asia. "There was not the slightest proof of this in 1854. All the proof was the other way. At this moment you are told, also, that Russia is aggressive. There is not the smallest proof of it. Russia, from the beginning of these disturbances, has made the most distinct and frank offers to the English Government as to the terms on which the Russian Government and people believe that peace might be made to the enormous and permanent advantage of the Christian subjects of the Porte. It was said then that Turkey was the only safe keeper of the Straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, that is the Straits that lead from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. There was no proof that Turkey is the only safe keeper of those Straits. The Porte held those Straits for three hundred years, and would not allow any mercantile ship to pass through, and it was only by the power of Russia, and by the treaty with Russia after the war with Russia, that these Straits were opened to the navigation of the mercantile ships of the world. . . . It was

spent so much time. I have been here during many months in the year. In one year I was labouring under serious and prolonged illness ; and during one visit which my family paid to this place we were stricken by a very heavy and grievous affliction. These things dwell in the memory, and they strengthen and deepen the interest which I feel for everything connected with the interests of this town."

said, too, that England's interests were at stake—interests in India and in the Levant. There was no proof of it then ; there is no proof of it now. Of all the speakers in public, of all writers in the Press who have written against Russia in this matter, and in favour of Turkey and in favour of war, there is not one of them who has been able to lay down accurately and distinctly any kind of proof that the interests or honour of England were or are concerned in the course we have taken with regard to this great Eastern Question. Why, if it were some poor and hapless criminal brought to trial before one of your courts, and before a jury, if liberty only is at stake, there is more care taken. You have advocates on each side, you have witnesses for the prosecution and defence, you have an impartial jury, and the judge is careful that nothing shall be said against the prisoner that is not proved, and he warns the jury against being actuated by prejudice, and to put away what they have heard before the trial comes on ; and he entreats them, if there be any feature in the case which can leave a doubt on the mind of any of them as to the guilt of the poor wretch at the bar, they should give their verdict in his favour. But here you go into a great transaction, a great war ; you spend your millions of money, you send your brothers and sons to the slaughter, and you condemn to death, it may be, as in the last case, a million of human beings, and you have not a single definite or proved fact to justify the course you have taken."

This was the substance of all that could ever be argued about the relations of England and Russia, from the same point of view, during the eventful years which followed. Mr. Bright denied that there was anything to justify us, either in 1854 or in 1876, to involve this country in a struggle with Russia, and he entreated his fellow-countrymen not to be misled by "the rhodomontade and halderdash" of the Prime Minister. If public opinion were only

right in the matter, the Government would not be likely to go wrong; and Mr. Bright had some confidence that Englishmen would remember 1854, and would refuse to be dragged into war at the bidding of any Minister.

In his opposition to the policy of braggadocio which had been adopted by Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet, and which had already threatened to lead us into a new war with Russia—as in his opposition to former wars, and to the war system in general, Mr. Bright was governed by strong religious motives. In all his public actions he had been careful to acknowledge the basis on which his principles rested. He believed in the necessity of referring political considerations, like the considerations of our everyday life, to the test of morality; and he went beyond this, appealing constantly to the laws of the Supreme, and to the precepts of Christianity.

It is a question which has been argued in every age, and on which different men, though equally devout, have come to different conclusions, how far the Christian faith, or even the moral convictions of a statesman can be allowed to affect his mind in the discussion of questions which do not apparently involve these ideas. The controversy was carried on with no little fervour in 1876 and the following years; and no man, whether a minister of religion or a layman, was more courageous or consistent than Mr. Bright in urging the religious view of the question. His general method of treating the subject is well exemplified in the closing passage of the Llandudno speech, which may be quoted here:—

“I think,” said Mr. Bright, “we ought to begin to ask ourselves how it is that Christian nations, that this Christian nation, should be involved in so many wars. If one may presume to ask oneself what, in the eye of the Supreme Ruler, is the greatest crime which His creatures commit, I think we may almost with certainty conclude that it is

the crime of war. Somebody has described it as the sum of all villainies, and it has been the cause of sufferings, misery, and slaughter which neither the tongue nor pen can ever describe. And all this has been going on for eighteen hundred years, after men have adopted the religion whose Founder and whose Head is denominated the Prince of Peace. It was announced as a religion which was intended to bring 'Peace on earth and goodwill towards men;' and yet, after all these years, the peace on earth has not come, and the goodwill among men is only partially and occasionally exhibited, and amongst nations we find almost no trace of it, century after century. Now in this country we have a great institution called the Established Church. I suppose that great institution numbers 20,000 or more places of worship, churches in various parts of the kingdom. I think this does not include what there are in Scotland and what there are in Ireland. With these 20,000 churches there are at least 20,000 men, educated and for the most part Christian men, anxious to do their duty as teachers of the religion of peace; and besides these there are 20,000 other churches which are not connected with the established institution, but have been built and are maintained by that large portion of the people who go generally under the name of Dissenters or Nonconformists, and they have their 20,000 ministers—men, many of them, as well educated, as much Christian and devoted as the others—and they are at work continually from day to day, and they preach from Sabbath to Sabbath what they believe to be the doctrines of the Prince of Peace; and yet, notwithstanding all that, we have £25,000,000 or £26,000,000 a-year spent in sustaining armies and navies in view of wars which, it is assumed, may suddenly and soon take place. Now, why is it, I should like to ask, if there be any clergymen of the Church of England or any ministers of Nonconformist bodies here, and if my words should go from this platform to a

wider circle than can now hear me, I would ask all these ministers of these churches—on this point there can be no difference between church and chapel, for all these teachers and preachers profess to be the servants of the Most High God, and teachers of the doctrines of his Divine Son, and, being such, may I not appeal to them and say—What have you, forty or fifty thousand men, with such vast influence, what have you been doing with this great question during all the years that you have ministered and called yourselves the ministers of the Prince of Peace? And I would not confine my appeal to them only, but to the devout men of every church and every chapel who surround the minister and uphold his hand, who do in many things his bidding, and who join him heartily and conscientiously in his work—I say, what are they doing? Why is it that there has never been a combination of all religious and Christian teachers of the country with a view of teaching the people what is true, what is Christian upon the subject? I believe it lies within the power of the churches to do far more than statesmen can do in matters of this kind. I believe they might so bring this question home to the hearts and consciences of the Christian and good men and women of their congregations, that a great combination of public opinion might be created which would wholly change the aspect of this question in the country and before the world, and would bring to the minds of statesmen that they are not the rulers of the people of Greece or of the marauding hordes of ancient Rome, but that they are, or ought to be, the Christian rulers of a Christian people.”*

The excitement of Englishmen over the Eastern Question culminated in the year 1878, when Russia finally overcame the resistance of the Turks, brought her victorious army to the gates of Constantinople, and extorted a Treaty at San

* Papers of the Peace Society.

Stefano which the Great Powers insisted on revising at Berlin. The House of Commons met earlier than usual, and the Government asked a vote of credit amounting to six millions sterling, in order to strengthen the national armaments. Mr. Bright warmly supported Mr. Forster's amendment to this vote, remarking on the inconsistency of going to a peaceful Conference "with shotted cannon and revolvers." He admitted that the Government deserved credit for rising superior to "the raving lunacy of the *Pall Mall Gazette*" and "the *delirium tremens* of the *Daily Telegraph*," but urged the House and country to shake off the miserable nightmare of Russian aggression, and to adopt a policy of peace and security.

As the year advanced, and our relations with Russia became more strained and delicate, his language was marked by still greater fervour, and he took several opportunities of warning his fellow-countrymen against the danger which was so imminent. Thus, in the course of an address to a number of Sunday-school teachers at Rochdale, on the 19th of April, he said—"When we think of the illustrious lady who sits upon the throne of these realms—when we think how bright in the main are the annals of her reign—the one greatest blot upon them until now being the war of twenty or five-and-twenty years ago—let us hope that her heart may be spared from the sorrow, and that the record of her reign may be spared from the additional blot which could not be separable from it if again the blood of our countrymen and the blood of other people's countrymen shall be shed in favour of a cause which no man can distinctly define or describe, and in pursuit of objects which no rational man in the world believes it is possible for arms to obtain."

At a Liberal meeting in Manchester, on the last day of the same month, he blamed the Government for their inconsistency in professing a peaceful policy and yet taking steps, one after the other, which had brought us to the brink of

war. The Government, he urged, had forfeited the confidence of the nation because they were wanting in truthfulness; and in particular he declared that the failure of the Constantinople Conference, and of the other efforts put forth by neutral Powers, was to be laid to the charge of Ministers whose real and concealed object he believed to be the restoration of Turkey's independence and integrity.

A few days after this, in a letter to a workmen's meeting at Liverpool, he returned to the charge. The Government, he said, was no friend to freedom at home or peace abroad. To add to its other offences, it had now introduced into Europe a force of Mahomedans from India. If this policy was pushed any further, the people would begin to ask themselves if they had gone back to the times of Charles the First, and "if the prevalent idea of English freedom, and of the constitutional principles and practice, is only a dream." He urged the working-men throughout the country to meet and speak at "this moment of supreme interest, it may be of supreme peril. The country and its dearest interests are in evil hands, and it is possible for a Cabinet by the same policy to betray both Crown and people."

The danger passed. There was no war with Russia; and perhaps a majority of Englishmen would be found to maintain that the avoidance of the calamity was due to the great influence and unwearying efforts of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and the other Liberal orators who preached in season and out of season against the claptrap of the "balance of power" and the jargon of "British interests." Mr. Bright heartily subscribed to Lord Derby's sensible observation that "the greatest British interest was peace." It was indeed his own profession of faith, to which he clung throughout his public career, and it might well serve as a motto to express the character of his labours during one-half of his public life.

The judgment of the country, which in 1873 had turned

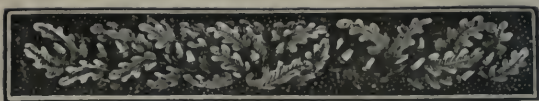
against the Liberal leaders—though perhaps not against Mr. Bright personally—had now once more turned in their favour. The result was that on the earliest possible occasion Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues were reinstated in power. In the meantime, however, thanks to the long duration of Parliaments under the Constitution, a Government which had manifestly lost its hold upon the constituencies was able to take a new departure in its Indian policy, leading up to a disastrous and useless war. From similar causes a second disastrous war occurred in South Africa; and thus the calamity averted in Europe was courted in our dependencies across the seas. Mr. Bright, who had never been slow to admit the incalculable value of our foreign possessions and colonies, at the same time saw that such enterprises as those for which Lord Lytton and Sir Bartle Frere had made themselves responsible were the most likely way of any to alienate and forfeit them.

In the autumn of 1878 he found an opportunity of drawing a moral from the events of the time, in one of his latest significant utterances on the question of international peace and goodwill. Writing to an Italian correspondent, in reference to a Peace Congress which was held at Bologna, he said:—"How can wars be avoided and standing armies dissolved? This is the great question for Europe, and for every nation in Europe. To my thinking the directest way—I was going to say the only way—to this great end lies in Free Trade between the peoples of Europe. If tariffs were abolished, or even if they were made very moderate, the nations would trade freely with each other, their commerce would increase enormously, and they would bit by bit become like one grand nation; their commercial interests would multiply on such a scale, and their mutual knowledge and intercourse would become so intimate that the ambition of monarchs and of statesmen would be impotent to drive them to war."

Here is the pith of Mr. Bright's philosophy on the subject of international relations. The cultivation of peace in the interest of each particular nation, the maintenance of goodwill between the peoples by encouraging freedom of commerce, with arbitration for the avoidance or settlement of disputes—this is a system complete and beneficent in its nature, which requires for its establishment only the greater humanisation of the peoples, and a bolder enterprise on the part of Governments and individual statesmen.

No doubt the time will come for the fulfilment of these aspirations; and it may not be many years hence. They are not a dream, not a mere Utopia; sufficient progress has been made in the present generation to justify an assured confidence in the immediate future. The age which has witnessed the Washington Treaty and the Geneva Arbitration ought not to despair of seeing the international relations of the civilised Powers established on a firm and rational basis.





CHAPTER XXIV.

IRISH REMEDIES.

IN connection with every other prominent member of his party, Mr. Bright was fully prepared for the dissolution of 1880. As soon as it was announced he hurried to Birmingham in order to address his constituents, and the first thing he said to them was that the appeal of the Government to the country had brought an extraordinary relief to the whole nation. "The worst of modern Parliaments" was coming to an end, and "the worst of Administrations" was brought up for judgment.

His speech to the Birmingham working-men on this occasion was shaped on the lines which he had more than once observed in similar circumstances. He reviewed the political history of England for the past fifty years, and showed how consistently the Liberal party had promoted the cause of popular liberty, and how constantly the Conservatives had stood in the way of progress. As for the latter, they remained now what they had ever been. If there were no Reform Bill, they would oppose Reform; if there were no system of Free Trade, they would defend Protection; if there were a crippled and shackled Press, they would emphasize the dangers of free discussion; and

if there were no national education, they would say there must be no education without a great deal of religion, and that religion must be taught by the Church of England.

The indictment of the outgoing Ministry was certainly severe. The policy of the Tories, Mr. Bright declared, had always been a policy of restriction, selfishness, and injustice, and the working-men were always the greatest sufferers. They suffered by being excluded from the franchise; they suffered from the dearness of bread; they suffered when they could not buy a newspaper for less than sevenpence. For the past six years there had been no considerable, if indeed any, liberal measures. "They had had extravagance unknown for many years. They had had increasing debt and increasing taxes; and if they had not paid off all they owed, it would have to be paid by somebody some day. The Government came in with a purse full—six millions of pounds; they went out with a purse not only empty, but eight millions to the bad. Instead of dealing economically with the resources of the country, extending freedom, and doing everything they could to encourage industry, they had been marauding over half the world; and England, the mother of free nations, herself the origin of free Parliaments, had been supporting oppression in Turkey, and had been carrying fire and sword into remote territories in South Africa and in Afghanistan. Would they entrust their power in the future to men who had thus dealt with their interests, not in the remote past, but in the near past and in the present? To adopt the wise words of one of our best poets—

‘Tis time
To snatch their truncheons from the puny hands
Of statesmen whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy the world.’

He believed that there was now a voice sounding, and a

feeling stirring throughout the people of the United Kingdom, that would hurl from power the men who had abused it, and would place in their seats, and in the counsels of the Crown men whose policy was dictated not by a love for gunpowder and glory, but for the true and lasting interests of the great people who might entrust them with the authority of Government."

The country did what Mr. Bright had anticipated; and within two months of the dissolution, Mr. Gladstone's second Administration was installed in office. In the new Liberal Cabinet the senior member for Birmingham occupied the same position, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which he had held for a few months in 1873; and from that time forward his political conduct was to a great extent merged in that of the Government as a whole. During the first two sessions the attention of Parliament was almost entirely confined to Irish affairs, and Mr. Bright was heartily at one with his colleagues in the measures of 1880 and 1881, dealing with the condition of the tenants in the sister kingdom. Like them, he adopted the principles of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill as an exceptional provision for an exceptional predicament; and, in conjunction with them, he proposed the Land Law Bill as a message of peace to Ireland, in the hope of conciliating the Irish people by a full measure of justice, and of atoning to them by generous treatment for the misgovernment of centuries.

But in regard to the coercion which it was deemed necessary by the Cabinet to employ as a means of putting an end to agrarian outrages, and reducing the country to a peaceable condition before the introduction of remedial legislation, Mr. Bright was not entirely at one with his colleagues. In the autumn of 1880, when the Ministerial programme of the ensuing session was being considered, and when the lamentable state of Ireland constrained the Chief-Secretary, Mr. Forster, to ask for additional powers, it

became evident that Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain—whether they stood alone in the Cabinet or not—felt a difficulty in accepting the conclusions of the majority. Their contentions were understood to be, not that there should be no suspension of the right of Habeas Corpus in the disturbed districts, but rather that the promised remedial legislation should precede coercion. They addressed their constituents in this sense—of course without referring to the discussions which had taken place in the Cabinet; and their speeches were significant enough to reveal to the country the distinctness of the position which they had taken up. The enemies of the Government waited eagerly for the open breach which they thought must ensue from this difference of opinion; but they were disappointed in their expectation. The two members for Birmingham did not retire; and, on the other hand, no exceptional powers were taken by the Irish Government during the recess. But the opening of the session of 1881 was anticipated by a few weeks, and it was then found that Messrs. Bright and Chamberlain had admitted the necessity of putting coercion before remedy.

Mr. Bright spoke several times in the House of Commons during the consideration of the Land Law Bill in Committee; and he naturally took the more pleasure in helping to shape this important scheme of Irish reform because he had borne an active part in framing the Act of 1870. In the last-mentioned year he had been successful in adding to the Bill certain clauses which are known by his name, providing facilities for the purchase of their holdings by Irish tenants, with Government assistance; and it had been commonly said that the “Bright clauses” in the measure of 1870 had been a failure. It is a fact that these provisions were comparatively inoperative, because, as Mr. Bright himself said, the machinery employed to work them was defective. In 1881 Mr. Gladstone applied the same principles in a

more extended and elaborate sense, and thus remedied and completed, with fair hope of success, what had been imperfectly accomplished eleven years before.

The measure introduced by the Government in the year 1881, dealing with land tenure in Ireland, did not so much reform as remodel and revolutionise the whole system of the laws which define the relations between landlords and tenants. It was as John Bright had said in 1852; the English representatives and the Imperial Government—in other words the statesmen who successively inherited the traditions of Downing Street—were compelled to take up the matter in earnest, and to deal thoroughly with the grievances of the Irish people. No one will contend that the circumstances under which Parliament was called upon to consider and pass the Land Law Bill were free from serious objection. It was doubtless in some sense legislation under compulsion; and the people of England and Ireland had reluctantly agreed to the establishment of principles in one part of the United Kingdom which they would certainly have declined to apply to the other parts. But it must be admitted that the compulsion was due to the misgovernment of Ireland by Englishmen in former generations, and that this country was only expiating in 1881 the faults of our forefathers. It was absolutely impossible for any Ministry, whoever might have been in power, to conciliate the Irish people without a generous measure of tenant-right; and the alternative of conciliation was sheer coercion, against which the conscience of the country revolted. Coercion had been frequently tried, and as frequently proved to be a failure. The constituencies by their votes in 1880 had repudiated the older and more barbarous method, of which Lord Beaconsfield's manifesto seemed to forecast a renewal; and it was manifest that Mr. Gladstone had received from a large majority of the voters a mandate to redress the grievances of Ireland by recasting the existing Land Laws.

There was much significance in the demand, raised with no uncertain voice, that Mr. Gladstone and no one else should be the Liberal Prime Minister after the elections of 1880. The Marquis of Hartington technically had a prior claim to the position ; but the party, and it may be said the country at large, insisted on the return of the veteran leader to office, in spite of his withdrawal, and his recognition of Lord Hartington's claim. The reason doubtless was that men expected mere heroic measures from the author of the Irish legislation of 1869-70 than they had reason to expect from Lord Hartington ; and they made up their minds to a new departure in Land Law reform. And the nation, or at least the bulk of the Liberal party, was eager to reinstate the men of 1868, as well as to revert to the progressive policy of that famous Administration.

A memorable incident of the Parliament of 1880 was the election of Mr. Bradlaugh for Northampton ; and the occurrences which followed upon his attempt to take his seat, after his second election, served to emphasize the tolerant and impartial spirit of men who, like Mr. Bright, were not prevented by their personal religious opinions from boldly defending Mr. Bradlaugh's claim to sit in the House. The member for Northampton had originally objected to take the oath of allegiance, on the ground that the adjuration of the Deity was without meaning for him ; and he demanded to be allowed to make affirmation instead. Permission to do this was refused by the House ; and then Mr. Bradlaugh claimed to take the oath. This claim was disallowed, by reason of his having admitted that the prescribed form would not be binding upon his conscience ; but he was permitted to occupy his seat subject to any legal disability or penalty which might be established against him. The courts of law having decided that he had no right to sit under these circumstances, he appealed once more to the electors of Northampton, who again returned him ; and he then claimed

to take the oath in the usual form—which he was prevented from doing on the same grounds as before. On the 10th of May, 1881, it was ordered, on the motion of the Opposition leader, “that the Sergeant-at-Arms do remove Mr. Bradlaugh from the House until he shall engage not further to disturb the proceedings of the House.”

This was accordingly done ; and ultimately Mr. Bradlaugh submitted to the exclusion during the passage of the Land Bill through the Commons, in order that he might not embarrass the Government. But when the Bill had passed, and when it was found that there would be no possibility in the current session of carrying a measure to extend the right of making affirmation, Mr. Bradlaugh, on the 4th of July, gave formal notice to the Speaker and the Serjeant-at-Arms that he would again present himself at the door of the House, and would resist any force which might be used to prevent his entrance. On the 3rd of August he carried out his promise, and was then, by direction of the Speaker, on the authority of the vote of May 10th, forcibly removed from the precincts of the House.

Thereupon his colleague in the representation of Northampton, Mr. Labouchere, made a motion in the following terms:—“That in the opinion of this House the resolution passed on the 10th May last, that the Serjeant-at-Arms do remove Mr. Bradlaugh from the House until he shall undertake not further to disturb the proceedings of the House, meant that Mr. Bradlaugh should not come within the outer doors of this Chamber, and did not give any power to the Serjeant-at-Arms to hinder him from entering or remaining in all or any other portions of this edifice, and that therefore the Serjeant-at-Arms, and the officers of the House acting under him, in excluding Mr. Bradlaugh from such other portions of the edifice, acted without the authority of this House, and, in so doing, interfered with the privileges inherent in membership in this House, and of which no

member can be deprived without a resolution of this House to that effect." This motion the Speaker decided to be equivalent to a vote of censure upon his own conduct in carrying out the order of the 10th of May; and the result was that only seven members of the House saw fit to vote for it. But the debate showed that there were many more who strongly condemned Mr. Bradlaugh's forcible ejection, in spite of the fact that the employment of force against him had been challenged and courted by himself; and Mr. Bright had sufficient moral courage, and was sufficiently true to the principles of his whole life, to protest very warmly against the indignity shown towards a duly elected member, to defend with vigour and eloquence the privileges of the borough of Northampton, and to condemn the infliction of a religious disability upon Mr. Bradlaugh. To adopt such a course as this on the Treasury Bench required much boldness and confidence; and perhaps at no time has Mr. Bright displayed his independence of mind with greater significance.

As he very justly said, no such scene as that which had been witnessed by many hon. members then listening to him had ever been recorded in Parliamentary annals. "This thing," he said, "has not been done in a corner, because there are thousands of your countrymen who were standing outside in the streets, and who have witnessed a portion, and will know the whole nature of the scene that has taken place; and to-morrow morning more than a million copies of newspapers will narrate to the people of this country what has been done. Now, I will not touch upon the original question at all, and I will not complain of the resolution which the House passed, and least of all would I think of complaining of the course taken by the Speaker in this matter. But this, at any rate, I may put to hon. gentlemen opposite, and even to some of those on this side who have been from the first approvers of this course. I

would ask them what it is they are leading us to, because that which is now a manageable affair may become something very different. There were a few thousand persons assembled last night in Trafalgar Square, and some thousands assembled here to-day, but this is exactly one of those things which grow ; and you may bring yourselves, and the House may bring itself, into the most unfortunate and calamitous condition." Mr. Bright appealed to the Opposition leaders, and to the majority which had brought the House into these difficulties, to reconsider their action towards "a member who has been as fairly elected as any one," and to extricate the House from "a position most injurious to its own character, and most wrongful to the constituency which Mr. Bradlaugh represents."

This is already a *cause célèbre* in the history of the House of Commons ; and whenever it may be narrated, the moral courage of Mr. Bright, in the teeth of prejudice and misconception, will be mentioned to his credit.





CHAPTER XXV.

SUMMARY.

WHEN the time comes for estimating the character and achievements of John Bright as a statesman—which of course cannot be fitly done before his public career is closed—we shall be in a position to realise more fully than is yet possible the consistency with which he has adhered throughout his life to certain rules of action, and to a certain definite interpretation of Liberal principles. Mr. Bright has passed through successive stages in his political life, but they have not been progressive stages of mental development. He has not been gradually converted to the advanced Liberalism which we are wont to associate with his name; he has not, like some of the most eminent of his contemporaries, moved forward step by step, slowly and reluctantly, adopting the ideas of other men after more or less deliberation and persuasion. He began life as a convinced Radical, and he has not in any important particular either advanced upon or receded from the mark which he then made for himself.

Of no man in our own days can it be said with equal truth that, from being in his youth an unknown and uninfluential declaimer against many cherished institutions of the

day, he lived to be a Cabinet Minister, and to promote reforms of the most sweeping kind, without any material change in his own opinions and ideas. His fellow-countrymen had come round to his way of thinking; he had not himself bowed to the beliefs of other men.

With regard to most of the public questions of the century, as we have seen in the foregoing pages, he had approached their consideration from a genuinely Liberal, rational, and popular point of view, and had arrived at sound conclusions without difficulty or delay. He seems to have made remarkably few mistakes in the judgments which he passed on the principal topics of the day, as is shown by the fact that nearly all the predictions which he ventured to make in his earlier speeches have been fulfilled, and nearly all the objects which he set before him have been attained. He took up the Anti-Corn Law agitation with the confidence of entire conviction; and in less than ten years the victory was won. He attacked the Game Laws root and branch, and, though the resistance was in this case more obstinate, and his fellow-workers less numerous, the grievances which he more especially laid bare have been removed. He saw more clearly than any man the true significance and value of Free Trade, and the rich promise which it held out in the future; and he lived to see his forecast more than justified. He strove to make a practical question of what was held to be a vague sentimentality—the general conciliation of the peoples on a basis of international goodwill and peace; and the system has already scored triumphs which could not have been anticipated thirty years ago.

On India, John Bright took the statesman's view from the beginning. He saw that the rude method of conquest and corruption must sooner or later fail to hold together such a heterogeneous empire. In one of his first speeches on the subject he boldly expressed an opinion that the edifice we had reared in India is too vast. "There are

few," he maintained, "who, looking back to the policy that has been pursued, will not be willing to admit that it has not been judicious but hazardous—that territories have been annexed that had better have been left independent, and that wars have been undertaken which were as needless as they were altogether unjustifiable. The immense empire that has been conquered is too vast for management, its base is in decay, and during the last twelve months it has appeared to be tottering to its fall." The system of which Mr. Bright here spoke was remodelled after the Mutiny of 1857; and even now, after so great an improvement has been effected, there are many who believe that our Eastern dependency is too vast to be permanently retained by force of arms.

On Ireland, Mr. Bright went at once to the root of the whole difficulty when he told his fellow-countrymen the unwelcome truth that the misrule of their ancestors must be expiated by the present generation, and that both the ecclesiastical and the territorial laws must be revolutionised before England could hope to pacify and satisfy the Irish people. The Protestant Church, he said in 1845, "is at the root of the evils of that country. The Irish Catholics would thank you infinitely more if you were to wipe out that foul blot than they would even if Parliament were to establish the Roman Catholic Church alongside of it. They have had everything Protestant—a Protestant clique which has been dominant in the country; a Protestant Viceroy to distribute places and emoluments amongst the Protestant clique; Protestant judges who have polluted the seats of justice; Protestant magistrates, before whom the Catholic peasant could not hope for justice. They have not only Protestant but exterminating landlords, and more than that, a Protestant soldiery, who, at the beck and command of a Protestant priest, have butchered and killed a Catholic peasant, even in the presence of his widowed mother. All

these things are notorious; I merely state them." The ruling classes scouted Mr. Bright's conclusions in 1845; but in 1868 they adopted them.*

On the United States of America he formed a judgment which was exceedingly unpopular at the time, and which could not be accepted without a certain sense of humiliation by men who had so often and so long poured contempt on American institutions. Mr. Bright's admiration of the States as the home of liberty was unbounded, and he introduces the country, by way of illustration and example,

* In 1866, speaking on the motion to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, Mr. Bright made use of language which deserves to be recalled to mind on the morrow of the session of 1881. "I spent," he said, "two autumns in Ireland in the year 1849 and 1852, and I recollect making a speech in this House not long afterwards, which some persons thought not very wide of the mark. I recommended the Ministers of that time to take an opportunity to hold an Irish Session of the Imperial Parliament—to have no great questions discussed connected with the ordinary matters which are brought before us, but to keep Parliament to the consideration of this Irish question solely, and to deal with those great matters which are constant sources of complaint; and I said that a session that was so devoted to such a blessed and holy work would be a session, if it were successful, that would stand forth in all our future history as one of the noblest which had ever passed in the annals of the Imperial Parliament. . . All history teaches us that it is not in human nature that man should be content under any system of legislation and of institutions such as exist in Ireland. You may pass this Bill, you may put the Home Secretary's five hundred men into gaol—you may do more than this, you may suppress the conspiracy and put down the insurrection, but the moment it is suppressed there will still remain the germs of this malady, and from these germs will grow up as hitherto another crop of insurrection and another harvest of misfortune. And it may be that those who sit here eighteen years after this moment will find another Ministry and another Secretary of State ready to propose to you another administration of the same ever-failing and ever-poisonous medicine. I say there is a mode of making Ireland loyal. I say that the Parliament of England, having abolished the Parliament of Ireland, is doubly bound to examine what that mode is, and, if it can discover it, to adopt it."

in almost all his speeches. He bids his hearers consider the Irish emigrant to America, settling down to an industrious life, prospering and earning respect—yet filled with hatred for the laws of his native country. He compares the position of the President with that of the European monarchs, with a decided preference for the former. He extols the economy, the enterprise, the commercial activity, the peaceful disposition, the strong sense of American citizens, and is never tired of dwelling upon the model set up for our imitation by that oldest of our colonies, which has made itself into a mighty empire. “Give us,” he said in 1854, whilst condemning the war with Russia—“give us seven years of this infatuated struggle upon which we are now entering, and let the United States remain at peace during that period, and who shall say what will then be the relative positions of the two nations? Have you read the reports of your own Commissioners to the New York Exhibition? Do you comprehend what is the progress of that country, as exhibited in its tonnage, and exports, and imports, and manufactures, and in the development of all resources, and the means of transit? There has been nothing like it hitherto under the sun. . . . Our trade will decay and diminish—our people, suffering and discontented, as in all former periods of war, will emigrate in increasing numbers to a country whose wise policy is to keep itself free from the entanglement of European politics—to a country with which rests the great question, whether England shall, for any long time, retain what she professes to value so highly—her great superiority in industry and at sea.”

In this also Mr. Bright was proved to be a true diviner of the future; and later, as we have seen, when the States had their day of war and taxation, his unerring judgment went straight to the mark, and enabled him to read the signs of the times though the majority of Englishmen had obstinately closed their eyes.

On our wars of aggression and passion, on the Russian bugbear and the Afghan will-o'-the-wisp, on the senseless jealousy of France, and the petty expeditions against African savages, Mr. Bright has been equally outspoken, though perhaps less transparently and entirely just than on the other subjects referred to above. Hating war on principle, and honestly believing that it is a folly as well as a crime in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, he has occasionally, it may be contended, been too indiscriminating in his denunciation. His critics, at any rate, urge that he has made too little allowance for the necessities of a great State, and has been too grudging in his admission that wars—as in the Civil War in the United States—may be completely justifiable for at least one of the combatants. If Mr. Bright is fairly open to these strictures, it must still be granted that his views upon war in general have commended themselves to a large section of his compatriots, and his teaching has done much to advance the cause of peace, arbitration, and international agreement.

Lookers-on have one advantage in tracing the career of Mr. Bright which is not always enjoyed by the admirers and followers of a prominent politician—they can foresee with something like certainty the attitude which will be taken on any given subject by the "Tribune of the People." His principles of thought and action are so well defined, so simple and direct in their application, that they leave little room for doubt as to the course which they will impose, in any given circumstances, upon those who profess them. This clearness of application alone could not suffice to make a man who holds certain opinions act invariably in accordance with them; but when to just opinions a statesman adds a high moral courage, and a straightforwardness of purpose superior to any distraction or temptation, then we may count on having amongst our rulers at least one thoroughly consistent, unswerving, and entirely trustworthy man.

If therefore, in the foregoing pages, the reader has noted the omission of any reference to Mr. Bright's action in regard to particular measures or proposals of legislation brought forward either by a Minister or by a private member, he may with safety conclude that in all these cases the champion of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform has taken the side which has most closely accorded with the principles unflinchingly adhered to by him from the outset of his public career. In Foreign Policy—international goodwill based upon Free Trade and the primary importance of peace; in Home Policy—universal equality before the law, the widest possible extension of the franchise, the most rigid economy in national expenditure, complete religious equality, implying the abolition of tests of all kinds, and of course the disestablishment of Churches; the duty of the State to find a remedy for all grievances, and the absolute right of the aggrieved to make known their wants and to prefer their demands; the right of the majority to decide the destinies of the country and the character of its government, but not unduly to constrain the liberty of the individual;* the ultimate sovereignty of the people, and

* A notable exception which Mr. Bright has consistently made to the general rule that the majority should exercise control over the minority is to be found in his objection to the principle of the Permissive Bill. Speaking on the proposal of Mr. (afterwards Sir W.) Lawson in the session of 1864, he said:—"What is meant by the representative system is not that you should have the vote of thousands of persons taken upon a particular question of legislation, but that you should have men selected from those thousands having the confidence of the majority of the thousands, and that they should meet and should discuss questions for legislation, and should decide what measures should be enacted; and therefore in this particular question I should object altogether to disposing of the interest of a great many men, and of a great many families, and of a great amount of property . . . by the vote of two-thirds of the ratepayers of any parish or town. By this Bill they would have the power to shut up at once, or rather at the end of the current year, as far as the sale of these articles is concerned,

the consequent limitation (by fact and precedent more than by statute) of the royal prerogative and the power of the House of Lords—these have been the maxims of John Bright's political career, which have constantly guided his actions, whether he sat in Opposition or below the Ministerial gangway or on the Treasury Bench.

There is a sense in which Mr. Bright has never been, and never will be, the leader of a school. The guiding spirit of a Parliamentary section does not find consistency one of the most serviceable qualities. Unyielding and unbending principle, thorough straightforwardness in judgment and in speech, are not the virtues which enable a party leader to keep a well-disciplined host at his back ; and it is no discredit to Mr. Bright to say that he could not hold his followers in hand half as well as many an inferior man. Nevertheless, he has had scores of followers in the House of Commons, as he has had hundreds of thousands in the constituencies ; and, without in any way aiming at it, he has founded and inspired a school. There are probably few advanced Liberals in the present generation who would not freely and gratefully acknowledge how much of their political education and moral and intellectual force they owe to him.

every hotel, inn, public-house, and beer-shop throughout the country. . . . There might be, and I think there would be, in all probability, sudden, capricious, and unjust action under this Bill, which would have a very unfortunate effect upon the interests of those immediately concerned ; and I think it might also create throughout the country violent discussions on the question, and I am afraid might even produce a great and pernicious reaction against the very honest and good objects which my hon. friend desires to carry out. For that reason, as a member of this House representing a very large constituency, and having my sympathies entirely with those who are endeavouring to promote temperance amongst the people, and after much consideration on this subject, I have never yet seen my way at all to give a vote which would tend to pass a measure such as that now proposed to the House."

That which has given Mr. Bright his highest rank as a statesman is the breadth and comprehension of his mind, and the strong grasp with which he has almost invariably been able to seize a new subject of discussion as soon as it arose. If he had been a mere Radical, he might never have secured the ear of the House ; but in point of fact he has urged his vigorous ideas on the questions of the day with the most sound and forcible arguments, and with an ornate eloquence particularly attractive to his hearers. It is impossible to study his speeches, or to listen to any one of them, without perceiving that the speaker is a well-read man, able to illustrate any and every topic from the stores of his memory. In English poetry, especially, his quotations are frequently recondite and curious, and very much to the point. The book from which he quotes most constantly is the Bible ; but he rarely makes use of a verse of Scripture unless it has a close and manifest application to the subject in hand.

The quality of his oratory is essentially lively and striking. He arrests the attention of his audience, and retains it from the beginning to the close. There is no hesitation, and very little of that involution of thought and language without which some public men would find it impracticable to make a speech. He employs not a little art in producing the effects which he desires, and yet his art is only simplicity and earnestness reduced to a system. It is easy for a speaker, with a copious flow of language, to pass at his pleasure from the light to the grave, or from the commonplace to the impressive ; and if he does this sincerely and genuinely, because he feels what he says, and not as a mere oratorical trick, he attains the acme of true oratory. There was a fine example of this in one of Mr. Bright's speeches during the Crimean War. He had commented on certain disastrous news from the East, and, with solemn gesture and measured voice, he sent a thrill of emotion through the House by the following brief sentences. "The Angel

of Death," he said, "has been abroad throughout the land. You may almost hear the very beating of his wings. There is no one to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the sideposts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on; but he calls at the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, equally as at the cottage of the humble." We have here a reference to Scripture and a reference to a pagan poet; but above all we have the fervour of genuine feeling.

At the time when these words are written, Mr. Bright is an active and influential statesman, though he has passed his seventieth year. He has power, authority, weight with his fellowmen; and he has never been more distinctly Radical and democratic in his opinions at any period of his career. That he will perform much useful work in the future, and urge upon his colleagues much sound and courageous legislation, no one who has studied his character can doubt. It is true that a large portion of what he contended for in his youth has been gained, but there are causes yet unsuccessful and reforms yet unachieved. Parliamentary government is still on an unsatisfactory footing; the franchise, the electoral system, the distribution of seats, are full of imperfections. Land-law reform is practically untouched in England and Scotland; and game-law reform has only just broken ground. These are amongst the questions of the immediate future, and we may rest assured that Mr. Bright is no less zealous for each and all of them than he was fifty years ago. As leader of the Peace Party, moreover, there is much for him still to do, and many victories on which he must have set his heart. He desires to see the relations of the various countries of the world established on a firmer basis, so that freedom of commercial intercourse may lead gradually and surely to a systematic peace. He aims at a greater liberty of individuals within the nation, and of nations in the community, so that the People—the empire which "lives in the cottage," as he once

expressed it—may be more completely master of its own destinies, and free to work out its highest aspirations.

These are lofty objects and benevolent designs, which no man could reasonably hope to see accomplished in his lifetime. They are the objects and designs not of an individual alone, but of States, and of humanity at large. It is the proud boast of Mr. Bright that he has done as much as any living man to promote them, and that he has clung to them with consistency and courage, in good report and in bad report, from youth to old age, until nearly all that was unpopular and despised has taken its place in the official programmes of governments, or in the catalogue of official triumphs. The great and endless struggle for Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform, which was once the cause of extreme Radicals, looked upon with distrust by the majority of their compatriots, is now the adopted cause of the Liberal party. The most moderate amongst them is not afraid or ashamed to profess the political faith for which Mr. Bright and his friends were once laughed at and reproached.

“Be just and fear not” is the motto which John Bright has adopted in preference to all others, and which he has honestly lived up to at every moment of his life. And it may unquestionably be said of him that his justice and fearlessness have done as much as the soundness of his principles to secure for him the high authority which he wields over his fellow-countrymen.





CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX OF EVENTS

IN THE LIFE OF MR. BRIGHT.

Born at Greenbank, Rochdale	- - - - -	Nov. 16, 1811
Entered his father's business of cotton spinning	- - - - -	
Took part in the Reform agitation; first public speeches on this subject (unreported)	- - - - -	1831
Made a tour in the Holy Land, which he subsequently described in a series of lectures to the Rochdale Literary Institution		1835
Promoted meetings on education and other subjects at Rochdale	- - - - -	
Joined the Provisional Committee of the Anti-Corn Law Association at Manchester	- - - - -	1838
Death of Mr. Bright's first wife. From this time he threw himself more energetically into the Anti-Corn Law movement, in conjunction with Richard Cobden	- - - - -	1841
Attended a Conference of Deputies in London, and signed an address to Members of Parliament	- - - - -	1842
Dissuaded the people from violent methods, as recommended by some of the Chartists, and addressed the working-men of Rochdale on this subject	- - - - -	1842
Went on a tour with Mr. Cobden in the agricultural districts, speaking against the Corn Laws at Taunton, Liskeard, Dorechester, Huntingdon, Alnwick, Salisbury, Canterbury, Reading, Oxford, Durham, etc., etc.	- - - - -	1843
Unsuccessfully contested the borough of Durham against Lord Dungannon (who was afterwards unseated)	- - - - -	April, 1843
Returned for Durham as a Free Trader, against Mr. Purves, a Conservative, by a majority of 73	- - - - -	July, 1843
First speech in the House of Commons on Mr. Ewart's motion, in support of the reduction of duties on raw materials		Aug. 1843

- Obtains a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the
Game Laws - - - - - March, 1845
- Speech at St. Alban's, at farmers' meeting, on Game Laws March, 1845
- Speech in the House of Commons on the Maynooth Grant—
against Church endowments - - - - - April, 1845
- Attended frequent meetings, in London and the provinces, on
the Corn Laws - - - - -
- Speech at a mass meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, under
the auspices of the League - - - - - Dec. 1845
- Spoke and voted for Sir Robert Peel's Corn Importation Bill,
gradually abolishing the Corn Laws - - - - - 1846
- Spoke in the House on Lord John Russell's Education Bill April, 1847
- Elected Member for Manchester at the General Election July, 1847
- Spoke in the House of Commons on the Government "Crime
and Outrage" Bill for Ireland - - - - - Dec. 1847
- Demanded a Committee to inquire into the condition of India 1847
- Spoke in the House of Commons on the Employment of the
Poor, and the condition of Ireland generally - - - Aug. 1848
- Opposed Mr. Disraeli's motion in the House of Commons in
favour of diminishing the burdens on land - - - March, 1849
- Spoke again on Irish topics in the House of Commons - April, 1849
- Appointed a member of the Select Committee of the House of
Commons on Official Salaries - - - - - 1849
- Strongly advocated retrenchment - - - - -
- Spoke in House of Commons on Mr. Disraeli's motion on "the
distressed condition of the owners and occupiers of land" April, 1851
- Spoke and voted against Lord Palmerston on motion of Cen-
sure in connection with the coercion of Greece - - - 1851
- Spoke in House of Commons on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill,
ridiculing the panic, Lord Russell's "Durham Letter," etc. May, 1851
- Took part in the reception of the Hungarian Kossuth, during
a visit of the latter to Lancashire - - - - - 1852
- Visited Ireland; spoke at Belfast - - - - - Oct. 1852
- Wrote a Letter to the *Freeman's Journal* on the disposition of
the temporalities of the Irish Church - - - - - Oct. 1852
- Spoke at a meeting for the Provisional Resuscitation of the
Anti-Corn Law League, on the accession of Lord Derby's
first Administration - - - - - 1852
- Spoke in the House of Commons favouring the admission of
Jews to Parliament - - - - - April, 1853
- Spoke in the House of Commons on Sir Charles Wood's Bill
for modifying the Government of India - - - - - June, 1853

- Spoke at Edinburgh in favour of the maintenance of peace Oct. 1853
- Spoke in the House of Commons on the Royal Message,
announcing the declaration of War against Russia - March, 1854
- Spoke in the House on the Enlistment of Foreigners Bill Dec. 1854
- Spoke in the House on the Peace Negotiations which had
been held, without result, at Vienna - - - Feb. 1855
- Spoke in the House on the resumption of the Russian War,
questioning the justice of the Black Sea demands - June, 1855
- Wrote a Letter to Mr. Watkin, of Manchester, declining to
commit himself to approval of the War by taking part in
the movement connected with the Patriotic Fund - Oct. 1855
- On repeated occasions Mr. Bright denounced the Crimean War
as a "terrible crime," "unjust," "disastrous," etc.; and
thus forfeited his popularity amongst his constituents -
- A severe illness interrupts Mr. Bright's public career for about
eighteen months - - - - - 1856
- Sojourn in Italy - - - - - 1856-7
- Expresses approval of the motion of Mr. Cobden, by which Lord
Palmerston was defeated on the Chinese War question - 1857
- Loses his seat at Manchester at the General Election - -
- Invited to stand for Birmingham, on the death of Mr. Muntz,
and unanimously elected in his absence - - Aug. 1857
- Spoke in the House of Commons on the Indian Mutiny, and
the assumption of the Government of India by the
Crown - - - - - May and June, 1858
- Spoke twice at Birmingham, addressing his constituents for
the first time after his illness, at a banquet and public
meeting - - - - - Oct. 1858
- Raised the question of Parliamentary Reform at Birmingham Dec. 1858
- " " " " at Manchester " "
- " " " " at Edinburgh " "
- " " " " at Glasgow " "
- Spoke in the House of Commons on Lord Derby's first Reform
Bill - - - - - March, 1859
- Spoke in the House on Financial Reform. This speech attracted
attention amongst the French Free Traders, and led up
to the mission of Mr. Cobden to France in the following
year - - - - - July, 1859
- Spoke on the Finances of India, on Sir C. Wood's motion for
an Indian loan of £5,000,000 - - - - - Aug. 1859
- Spoke in the House of Commons in favour of the abolition of
Church rates - - - - - April, 1860

- Appointed on a Select Committee to inquire for precedents as to the power of the Lords to deal with Money Bills; and proposed a report differing from that of the majority June, 1860
- Spoke in the House of Commons on the rejection by the House of Lords of Mr. Gladstone's proposal to repeal the paper duty, and on the report of the above Committee - July, 1860
- Supported Mr. Dunlop's motion for a Committee to inquire into certain irregularities in documents relating to the Afghan War of 1838 - - - - - March, 1861
- Spoke at Rochdale on the seizure of Messrs. Slidell and Mason on board an English vessel - - - - - Dec. 1861
- Spoke at Birmingham (Dec.) on the American War; and on other occasions defended the North against the South - 1862
- Spoke at Rochdale, shewing the connection between slavery and secession - - - - - Feb. 1863
- At St. James's Hall - - - - - March, 1863
- At the London Tavern, as chairman at a lecture by Mr. M. D. Conway - - - - - June, 1863
- Spoke in the House of Commons on Mr. Roebuck's motion for the recognition of the Southern Confederacy - - June, 1863
- Spoke at a Rochdale meeting, with Mr. Cobden, on the laws relating to the land, and to the labourers - - Nov. 1863
- Attacked in the *Times*; which led to a correspondence between Mr. Cobden and Mr. Delane - - - - -
- Spoke at Birmingham on the distribution of the land; commenting on the above correspondence - - - Jan. 1864
- Spoke in the House of Commons against Mr. Lawson's Permissive Bill - - - - - June, 1864
- Spoke twice in the House on Canadian subjects - - March, 1865
- Paid a warm tribute in the House of Commons to his friend Richard Cobden, on the occasion of the latter's death April, 1865
- Spoke in House on Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill for Ireland Feb. 1866
- Spoke twice in the House of Commons on Lord Russell's Reform Bill - - - - - March and April, 1866
- Visited Ireland and spoke twice at Dublin to large audiences Oct. and Nov. 1866
- Member of the Reform League - - - - - 1866-7
- Delivered several addresses on the subject of Parliamentary Reform during the recess; at Birmingham - - Aug. 1866
- „ „ at Glasgow - - Oct. „
- „ „ at Manchester - - Nov. „
- „ „ in London - - Dec. „

Spoke in the House of Commons on the Canadian Confederation Scheme - - - - -	Feb. 1867
Presided at a meeting in honour of Mr. Lloyd Garrison, the American abolitionist - - - - -	June, 1867
Spoke in the House on the Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill ; against voting-papers - - - - -	June, 1867
Spoke against the Minority Clause - - - - -	Aug. 1867
Spoke in the House of Commons on the condition of Ireland	March, 1868
" " on Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions	April, 1868
Presented with the freedom of the City of Edinburgh -	Nov. 1868
Spoke at Edinburgh on the pauperism of the country -	" "
Entered Mr. Gladstone's first Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade - - - - -	Dec. 1868
Sworn in as Privy Councillor - - - - -	Dec. 9, 1868
Re-elected for Birmingham ; spoke - - - - -	Dec. 21, 1868
Assisted in passing the Irish Church and Land Acts -	- 1869-70
Spoke at Birmingham on the Irish Reforms - - -	Jan. 1870
Retired from the Cabinet on the ground of ill-health -	Dec. 19, 1870
Settlement of the Alabama Claims by arbitration -	Sept. 1872
Spoke at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, in defence of the Government - - - - -	Nov. 1873
Resigned, with his colleagues - - - - -	Feb. 1874
Spoke strongly, in Opposition, against the revival of the "Russian Bugbear," at Llandudno - - -	Nov. 1876
Spoke at the inauguration of a statue to Cobden at Bradford	July, 1877
Spoke in the House of Commons - - - - -	Feb. 1878
Spoke at Rochdale and Manchester - - - - -	April, 1878
Addressed a large meeting of teachers at Birmingham -	Oct. 1879
Wrote to Mr. McCarthy recommending the Irish Parliamentary party to unite with the Liberals in "honest action" - - - - -	Dec. 1879
Spoke at Birmingham on the dissolution of Parliament -	March, 1880
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in Mr. Gladstone's second Administration - - - - -	April, 1880
Promoted the Ground Game Bill - - - - -	-
Resisted the application of Coercion to Ireland ; spoke against it with Mr. Chamberlain at a meeting at Birmingham in the recess - - - - -	1880
Assisted in carrying the Irish Land Law Bill through the House of Commons - - - - -	1881

THE
TYNE::PUBLISHING::COMPANY

— LIMITED —

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE.

Catalogue of Standard Works

AND

Handsome Gift Books,

SUITABLE FOR BIRTHDAY AND WEDDING PRESENTS,
SUNDAY-SCHOOL PRIZES, ETC.

SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARD CARDS,

*In a great variety of Beautiful Floral and Illuminated
Designs, with Texts and Mottoes.*

CHRISTMAS AND NEW-YEAR CARDS,

WITH SUITABLE WISHES, GREETINGS, ETC.

PRESENTATION PLATES IN COLOURS,

PORTRAITS OF EMINENT MEN,

Etc., Etc.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

GLADSTONE'S LIFE AND TIMES.

~~~~~  
Extracts from Opinions of the Press.  
~~~~~

From "THE LONDON WEEKLY DESPATCH."

This is a more comprehensive account of Mr. Gladstone's political career than some other volumes that have appeared lately. It is a painstaking and trustworthy compilation, bringing together in convenient order so much of the history of the past forty years as belongs to Mr. Gladstone's public life; with special reference, of course, to the statesman's own exploits and the orator's own speeches.

From "THE NEWCASTLE WEEKLY CHRONICLE."

The Tyne Publishing Company has commenced issuing a series of volumes, entitled, *Memorable Men of the Nineteenth Century*. The first volume of the new series—a handsomely-bound book of 320 pages—is devoted to Mr. Gladstone, whose political career is described in such a manner as to cover the history of the important period during which he has played so striking a part in our annals. . . . To our young people especially, and generally to all who wish to make themselves acquainted with the main facts and circumstances of Mr. Gladstone's policy and conduct in the past, Mr. Apjohn's production will be of undoubted service.

From "THE SCOTSMAN."

The Tyne Publishing Company have appropriately begun a series of biographies of "Memorable Men of the Nineteenth Century," with a *Life of Mr. Gladstone*, by Lewis Apjohn. It is a straightforward and pleasantly written narrative of the career of the Premier, embracing also brief summaries of the condition of the country, political and social, at the most memorable epoch of his life. The book will be found especially valuable to students of current politics.

From "THE GLASGOW DAILY MAIL."

The Tyne Publishing Co., of London and Newcastle, have issued the first of a series of interesting biographies of the most memorable men of the present age. The first volume is devoted to the life of our Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, and a very interesting and readable book it will be found to be. The book is well written, neatly printed, and handsomely bound, and gives promise that the series will be a success.

From "THE DUNDEE ADVERTISER."

The first of a new series of biographies has just been issued, under the title of *Memorable Men of the Nineteenth Century*. "Gladstone's Life and Times" has very appropriately been chosen as the subject of the first volume, and an interesting, instructive, and readable book has been produced.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

2/6

PEOPLE'S EDITION.

2/6

— NEW SERIES —

Each Crown 8vo, Cloth, Bevelled Boards, Portrait.

MEMORABLE MEN

OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

No. I.—NOW READY.

LIFE AND TIMES OF

W. E. GLADSTONE.

BY LEWIS APJOHN.

*Being a resume of the Principal Political Events
during the last Half Century.*

Now in its Second Edition of Ten Thousand.

No. II.—NOW READY.

LIFE AND WORK OF

LORD BEACONSFIELD.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

No. III.—NOW READY.

LIFE OF
REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

By REV. J. T. LLOYD.

No. IV.—NOW READY.

RICHARD COBDEN
AND THE
FREE TRADERS.

No. V.—IN PROGRESS.

JOHN BRIGHT and the MANCHESTER
SCHOOL OF POLITICIANS.

*To be followed Monthly by the Biographies of Eminent Men,
by various well-known Authors.*

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

NEW NOVEL.

— NOW READY —

*Crown 8vo, 400 pp., Cloth Gilt, Eight Full-page Illustrations,
Price 3s. 6d.*

UNA MONTGOMERY.

By CARTMEL KING.

NEW WORKS.

Demy 8vo, Cloth, Price 5s.

*Four Years in the Army
of the Potomac:*

A SOLDIER'S RECOLLECTIONS.

By MAJOR JONES,
UNITED STATES CONSUL, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

*Second and Revised Edition. Cloth, Crown 8vo,
with Maps, Price 2s. 6d.*

THE EMIGRANT'S FRIEND:

Containing Information and Advice for Persons intending to
Emigrate to the United States.

By MAJOR JONES,
UNITED STATES CONSUL, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

❖LIST❖OF❖PUBLICATIONS❖

TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY'S
HANDSOME GIFT BOOKS,
&c., &c.,

Suitable for Birth-Day and Wedding Presents,
Sunday School Prizes, &c.

The Sixpence Series.

Tyne Publishing Co.'s Pictorial Books for the Young
—*Livingstone Series, No. 1.*

Crown 4to, in Handsome Illustrated Covers, with Four
Full-page Beautifully-Coloured Illustrations, and
Eight Pages Descriptive Letterpress.

Tyne Publishing Co.'s Pictorial Books for the Young
—*Livingstone Series, No. 2.*

Crown 4to, in Handsome Illustrated Covers, with Four
Full-page Beautifully-Coloured Illustrations, and
Eight Pages Descriptive Letterpress.

The Life of David Livingstone, the Great Missionary
Traveller.

Royal 16mo, with Portrait and Vignette, in Illustrated
Paper Cover. *Price 6d.*

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

The Life of Grace Darling, the Heroine of the Farne Isles.

Royal 16mo, with Portrait and Vignette, in Illustrated Paper Cover. *Price 6d.*

The Shilling Series.

The Foundling, and other Tales. A Book for the Young.

Royal 16mo, in Cloth, Gilt, Frontispiece. *Price 1s.*
Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

The Covenanter's Bridal, and other Stories for Young People.

Royal 16mo, in Cloth, Gilt, Frontispiece. *Price 1s.*
Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

Aunt Margaret's Courtship, and other Tales.

Royal 16mo, in Cloth, Gilt, Frontispiece. *Price 1s.*
Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

The Life and Explorations of David Livingstone, the Great Missionary Traveller.

Royal 16mo, with Portrait of Dr. Livingstone, and several Full-page Illustrations, in Cloth, Gilt. *Price 1s.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

The Life of Grace Darling, the Heroine of the Farne Isles.

Royal 16mo, with Portrait of Grace Darling, and Frontispiece, in Cloth, Gilt. *Price 1s.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

Life of George Stephenson.

Royal 16mo, in Cloth, Gilt, with Chromo-Lithograph Portrait. *Price 1s.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

General Grant: His Life and Times. An Impartial Record of the American Civil War.

Royal 16mo, in Cloth, Gilt, with Portrait of General Grant, and Full-page Vignette. *Price 1s.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

Garibaldi: The Italian Hero and Patriot. His Life and Adventures.

Royal 16mo, in Cloth, Gilt, with Portrait and Vignette in Colours. *Price 1s.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 1s. 6d.

The Two Shillings and Sixpence Series.

Golden Gleams: Being over 350 Choice Selections from the Words and Works of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Gilt, with Portrait of Rev. H. W. Beecher. *Price 2s. 6d.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 3s.

Tales and Sketches of the Covenanters: Being a Choice Selection of Narratives in connection with the Persecution of the Scottish Covenanters.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Gilt, with numerous Full-page Illustrations. *Price 2s. 6d.* Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 3s.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

The Life and Explorations of David Livingstone, the Great Missionary Traveller.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Gilt, with Portrait of Dr. Livingstone, Map, and numerous Full-page Illustrations.
Price 2s. 6d. Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 3s.

Grace Darling, the Heroine of the Farne Islands.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, Gilt, with Portrait of Grace Darling and numerous Full-page Illustrations. *Price 2s. 6d.*
Bevelled Boards, Gilt Edges, 3s.

The Five Shilling Series.

Golden Gleams: Being over 350 Choice Selections from the Words and Works of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.

Crown 8vo, with Portrait of Rev. H. W. Beecher, Morocco, extra. *Price 5s.*

Tales and Sketches of the Covenanters: Being a Choice Selection of Narratives in connection with the Persecution of the Scottish Covenanters.

Crown 8vo, with numerous Full-page Illustrations, Morocco, extra. *Price 5s.*

Life and Explorations of Dr. Livingstone.

Crown 8vo, with Portrait of Dr. Livingstone, Map, and numerous Full-page Illustrations, Morocco, extra.
Price 5s.

Grace Darling, the Heroine of the Farne Isles.

Crown 8vo, with Portrait of Grace Darling, and numerous Full-page Illustrations, Morocco, extra.
Price 5s.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

The Thirty Shilling Series.

Life and Times of Garibaldi.

Large Demy Quarto, in one Vol., Full Morocco,
Elegant. *Price 30s.*

Life and Explorations of Dr. Livingstone.

Imp. 8vo, in two Vols., Illustrated, Half Morocco, Gilt
Edges. *Price 30s.*; also in Cloth, extra, *Price 21s.*

History of the Turko-Russian War.

Imp. 8vo, in two Vols., Coloured Illustrations, Half
Morocco, Gilt Edges. *Price 30s.*; also in Cloth,
extra, *Price 21s.*

Rutter's Life of Christ. (Catholic.)

Demy Quarto, in one Vol., 20 Illustrations, Elegantly
Bound, Morocco, extra. *Price 30s*

Bunyan's Select Works.

Large Demy Quarto, with 20 Full-page Coloured Illus-
trations, Morocco, extra. *Price 30s.*

Fleetwood's Life of Christ.

Large Demy Quarto, with 20 Full-page Coloured Illus-
trations, Morocco, extra. *Price 30s.*

Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

Large Demy Quarto, with 20 Full-page Illustrations,
Morocco, extra. *Price 30s.*

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

The Forty-Two Shilling Series.

Wilson's Tales of the Borders.

Demy Quarto, Three Volumes, with 60 Full-page Illustrations, Half-Morocco, Roxburgh Binding, or Marbled Edges. *Price 42s.* A Superior Edition, Gilt Edges, *Price 45s.*

History of Southern and Central Africa.

Demy Quarto, in one Vol., 30 Drawings on Stone, Elegantly Bound, Morocco, extra. *Price 42s.*

The Fifty Shilling Series.

Hume and Smollett's History of England.

With a continuation down to the present time. Embellished with Portraits of the Sovereigns, from William the Conqueror to Queen Victoria, and numerous Illustrations of Subjects of Historical Interest, which have been specially designed for this Edition. In three Vols., Half Morocco, Gilt Back and Edges. *Price 50s.*

The Fifty-Five Shilling Series.

Brown's Self-Interpreting Family Bible.

Large Royal Quarto, with 28 Full-page Coloured Illustrations, Maps, Illuminated Title Page, Four-page Family Register printed in Gold and Colours, and Family Portrait Gallery for Photographs; also a Comprehensive Biblical Cyclopædia. Bound in Morocco, extra, with Rims and Clasps. *Price 55s.*

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

WORKS IN PARTS.

Wilson's Tales of the Borders.

Illustrated with 60 Full-page Engravings, Complete in 30 Parts at 1s. each ; also in 60 Parts at 6d. each.

Hume and Smollett's History of England.

With numerous Original Illustrations. In 47 Parts at 1s. each.

History of the Turko-Russian War.

In Monthly Parts, Price 1s. and 2s. each, with Beautifully-Coloured Plates of the principal Scenes and Events of the War, including Portraits of the Emperor of Russia, the Sultan of Turkey, and other leading Celebrities. Complete in 24 Parts at 1s. each.

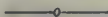
The Life and Times of Garibaldi, the Italian Hero and Patriot.

Large Demy 4to, with numerous Coloured Illustrations. In 12 Parts at 2s. each.



Tyne Publishing Company's SERIES OF PRESENTATION PLATES,

Forming when framed, equal, if not superior, to the Finest Oleographs.



One Shilling and Sixpence each.

The Descent from the Cross.

After Rubens, printed in Colours. Size of Subject 24 inches by 19.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

The Crucifixion.

Printed in Colours. Size of Subject 24 inches by 19.

Christ Blessing Little Children.

Printed in Colours. Size of Subject 24 inches by 19.

Parable of the Lily.

Printed in Colours. Size of Subject 24 inches by 19.

Portrait of Dr. Livingstone.

Printed in Colours. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Portrait of Stanley.

Printed in Colours. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Shilling Tinted Lithographs.

Portrait of John Bunyan.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 19 inches by 14.

Portrait of Dr. Livingstone.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Portrait of Stanley.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Portrait of Sir Wilfred Lawson.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Portrait of Garibaldi, the great Italian Patriot and Hero.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Portrait of the Rev. Morley Punshon.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

Portrait of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

Printed with Tint. Size of Subject 15½ inches by 21½.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

Tyne Publishing Company's
PACKETS OF FLORAL & ILLUMINATED CARDS,

SUITABLE FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARD,
BIRTHDAY, CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR, AND MEMORIAL CARDS,
IN A GREAT VARIETY OF DESIGNS AND TINTS.

Sunday School Reward Cards.

No. 1, containing 12 Cards, in Packets, Price 1s.,

With a Hymn and Beautifully-Designed Floral Border,
very suitable for transmitting in Letters to Friends,
or as Gift or Reward Cards for the Young.

No. 3, containing 12 Cards, in Packets, Price 6d.,

With an appropriate Text, in Artistically-Designed
Floral Border, very suitable for Sabbath School
Reward Cards.

No. 4, containing 18 Cards, in Packets, Price 1s.

With a verse of a Hymn, in Beautiful Floral Border—
Assorted Tints.

No. 5, containing 64 Cards, in Packets, Price 6d.

In Beautifully-Coloured Floral Designs, with appropriate
Texts of Scripture.

No. 6, containing 120 Cards, in Packets, Price 6d.

Printed in Gold and Colours.

No. 7, containing 240 Cards, in Packets, Price 6d.

Neat and Plain Text Cards.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

No. 8, containing 300 Cards, in Packets, Price 6d.

Printed in Gold and Colours.

No. 9, containing 600 Cards, in Packets, Price 6d.

Neat and Plain Text Cards.

No. 10, containing 20 Beautifully-Coloured Views of Biblical Places of Interest, &c., in Gold Border, with Interesting and Instructive Letterpress to each, Price 6d.

No. 11, containing 40 Beautifully-Coloured Illustrations of Biblical Subjects, in Gold Border, with Descriptive Letterpress to each, Price 6d.

No. 12, containing 10 Large Views of Bethany, Nazareth, Galilee, &c., in Gold Border, with Descriptive Letterpress to each, Price 6d.

No. 13, containing 10 Large Views of Samaria, Pools of Siloam, Bethseda, &c., in Gold Border, with Descriptive Letterpress to each, Price 6d.

No. 14, containing 60 Cards, price 6d., printed in Colour.

No. 15, containing 120 Cards, price 6d., printed in Colour.

No. 16, containing 240 Cards, price 6d., printed in Colour.

No. 17, containing 30 Cards, price 6d., printed in Gold and Colours.

No. 18, containing 60 Cards, price 6d., printed in Gold and Colours.

No. 19, containing 120 Cards, price 6d., printed in Gold and Colours.

A large Selection of Christmas and New Year Cards in Packets, Assorted Designs, from 6d. per Packet of 12.

SAMPLES ON APPLICATION.

LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

PARTS I. AND III. NOW READY,

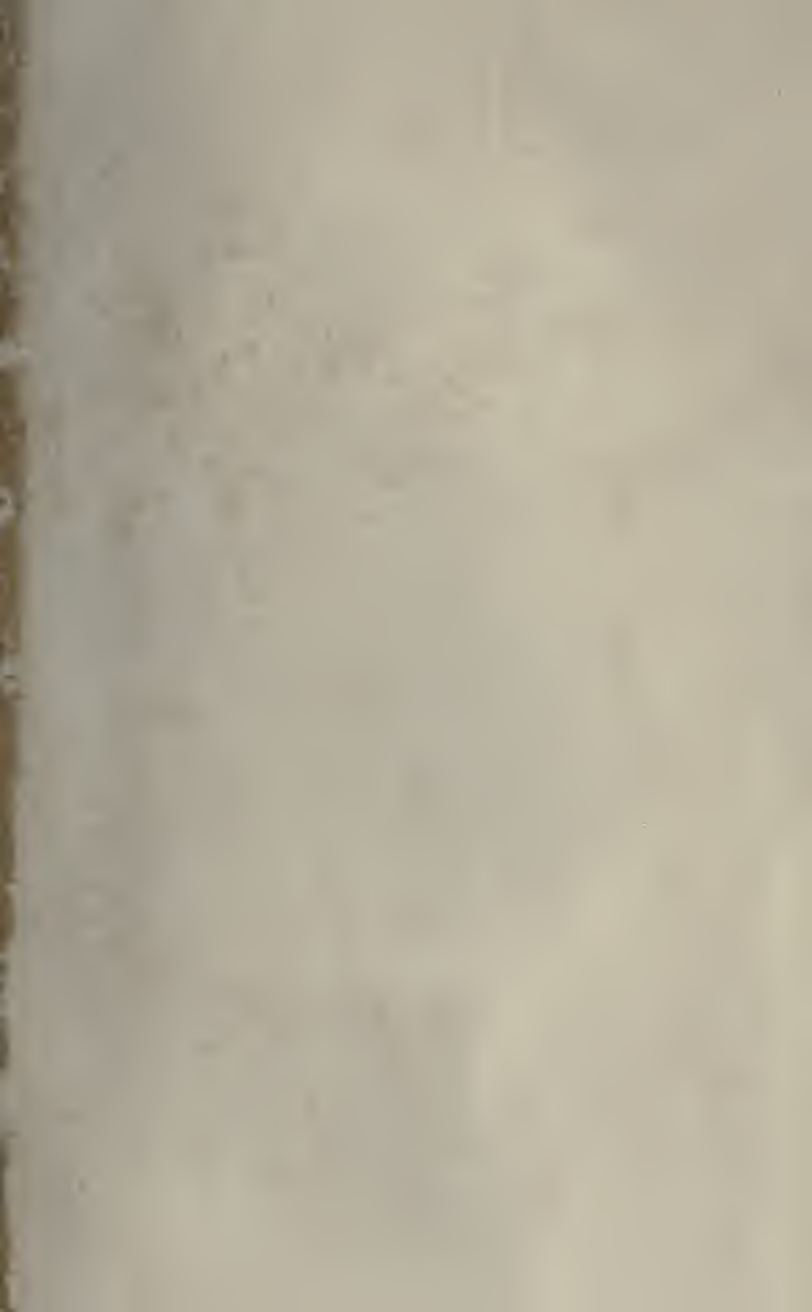
NOW PUBLISHING,
In Monthly Parts, Price One Shilling,

THE MANUFACTORIES
AND
COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS
OF
THE WORLD.
ILLUSTRATED.

*In Sixty Numbers, or complete in Three Volumes of
Twenty Numbers each.*

An Epitome, Descriptive, Scientific, and Historical, of
the Principal Manufactories and Commercial
Establishments of the World.

THE TYNE PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
LONDON: 14 Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row.



D.
565
B8A7

Apjohn, Lewis
John Bright and the party
of peace

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
